The American Labor Movement: A New Beginning

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Ethics and the Unions

Ethics are the morals, the concepts, and ideals which we live by. The progress of a society cannot be measured solely by the extent of its technological development. Economic realities, are of course, fundamentally important But if the ethical values of a society do not measure up to its technology, this very technology may well become an instrument for mass suicide the paramount problem in this atomic age, is to a very great extent, an ethical one.

Within the labour movement, there are, broadly speaking, two main tendencies that are as far apart as two worlds--the world of the slave who yearns to be free and the world of the master who wants to keep him in chains. What is right for the master is wrong for the slave. One is

conservative and opportunistic while the other is revolutionary and dynamic.

The ethics of the labour bureaucrats are those of the depraved business community of which they consider themselves a part. With its huge membership, its bulging treasuries and its political influence, business unionism, as represented by the AFL-CIO is an unhealthy movement. Since its officialdom are the de facto masters and not the servants of the membership, it is essentially an anti-working class movement.

There was a time when the American labour movement was inspired by a noble, revolutionary idea; the emancipation of the workers from wage slavery. Unions were inspired by the vision of a free, cooperative commonwealth dedicated to the happiness and free creative development of every human being. Labor was most militant when invigorated by these ideals. Its ethics were those of a revolutionary movement striving for a better world. These ethics and these ideals are as valid today as they were yesterday and will be tomorrow.

The contrast between the revolutionary labour movement and the capitalist defenders of "business unionism" becomes apparent when we compare the attitude of the

IWW and the business unionists. The Preamble to the Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World reads;

> The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.
>
> Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.
>
> We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in

common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

The self-identification of the business unionist with the rest of the capitalist system was affirmed by Samuel Gompers, a founder and (except for one term) perennial President of

the AFL. In 1894, Gompers declared that 'socialism is economically, socially and industrially wrong - an impossibility." In 1900, Gompers helped found and later became vice-president of the National Civic Federation, an alliance of labour leaders, industrialists and bankers dedicated to cooperation between the workers and their employers for the preservation of capitalism.

Gompers' successor as President of the AFL, William Green declared in 1935, that:

> the majority of the employers sincerely and honestly wish to maintain decent wage standards and human conditions of employment . . . they do not want the exploitation of labour or the consuming public and are influenced in all their dealings by a spirit of fair dealing and fair play . . .

This attitude was reaffirmed in the constitution of the AFL. It was also expressed by David Dubinsky, President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) (now deceased), who told reporters of the *New York Times* (June 9, 1957 that 'labour needs capitalism like a fish needs water.'

The American labour movement as it exists today, is the

result of the interaction, over many decades, of business unionism and revolutionary unionism. Its major defects stem from the former and its constructive tendencies come from the latter. It is necessary to examine the revolutionary syndicalist tradition of the American labour movement, the better to understand the path that must be followed for its regeneration and further progress. (Note the term "revolutionary unionism" is meant to denote dedicated radicals openly committed to the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of a free, classless and stateless society. The term also includes unconscious radicals whose acts of rebellion--direct economic action, wildcat strikes, slowdowns, etc.--threaten the stability of the system.)

Corrupt Unions

The main business before the second convention of the AFL-CIO (1957) was the expulsion of corrupt unions and adoption of a "Code of Ethics." Events at the convention demonstrated that the very nature of such a movement made it incapable of correcting its organic deficiencies or performing even the few constructive tasks that it set for itself.

There is every reason to believe that the accusations of the Senate Investigating Committee, exposing corruption in the Teamster's and other unions, were true. As far back as 1937, the Teamsters union, then under the administration of Dan Tobin, was considered one of the most corrupt in the country. It was the main support of racketeering in the trucking, laundry, poultry, and in the cleaning and dyeing industries. Dave Beck (Teamster president at the time of the Senate hearings) was trained by Dan Tobin, who appointed him as his successor.

But the Teamsters were not alone in this corruption. In 1932, the AFL admitted that twenty eight of its Chicago unions were controlled by gangsters of the Al Capone type. Of the fifteen members of the AFL Executive Board in 1937, six of them headed admittedly corrupt unions. The colossal corruption in the building trades was common knowledge. Racketeering and corruption were greatest in the very unions, that in numbers and resources, constituted the backbone of the AFL--the Teamsters and building trades.

The Teamsters union was in the AFL for fifty four years. Without its support no one could sit on the all-powerful Executive Council, nor could George Meany, himself a

member of the plumbers building trades union, have become president of the AFL. It is inconceivable that Meany was unaware of these facts. Meany pretended that he was "shocked" by the scope of the rackets. (Note: Nor has this changed with Lane Kirkland, Meany's personally appointed successor.)

Only when its hand was forced by the labour-baiting Senate Investigating Committee did the AFL-CIO create its "Ethical Practices Committee." It should be obvious that the labour bosses are afraid to do more than scratch the surface. They shrink from undertaking a thorough, honest investigation of the American labour movement, because such an investigation would prove that business unionism is rotten to the core and that the AFL-CIO as a whole, must share responsibility for the notorious character and conduct of the accused unions.

What the Code of Ethics does *not* mention is more important than what it *does*. Nothing is said about narrowing the gap between the swollen salaries of many union officials and the low wages of the duespayers. Nothing is said about the making of binding, long term agreements with the bosses without a referendum of the membership. Nothing is said about the power to call or

forbid strikes or the general attitude of "buddy buddy" between the bosses of the unions and the bosses of industry. Nothing is aid about the endorsement of political candidates or support of the imperialist policies of the state.

It is little wonder that such spokesmen of big business as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* enthusiastically praised the AFL-CIO Code of Ethics as a model of "labour statesmanship". This is a capitalist code. It is unethical for labour, because its ethics are the ethics of capitalism.

"Ethical" Business Unions

Not all American unions are totalitarian or infested with racketeers and other corrupt elements. A few unions such as the International Typographers Union, can be considered free of this taint. The United Automobile Workers (UAW) and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) do not compare with the typographers in this respect, although they do meet the standards set by the AFL-CIO Code of Ethics. But the problem is really much deeper, since the concept held by even the best leaders of the best unions is not a genuine working class ethical

concept. These leaders, almost without exception, identify themselves and their interests with the business and bureaucratic world around them. Erring union leaders have often been urged to emulate the alleged high ethical standards of these unions. For example, The *New York Post* (May 1st, 1957 carried the following dispatch:

> . . Lamar, Missouri The white frame house where President Harry S. Truman was born on May 8, 1884, was purchased yesterday by the United Automobile Workers which plans to make it into a shrine....

The gentleman who gave the order to drop the first atom bomb in history on defenceless civilians; who, in a sense, inaugurated the period of greatest danger and insecurity ever known, is thus honoured by the leadership of the UAW! What are the ethical implications of such expenditures of union funds?

A headline in the October 1957 issue of the *Auto Worker*, official organ of the UAW reads:

> … PROPHET OF CAPITALISM - Blackpool, England: Newspapers of every shade of opinion agreed that Reuther had aroused a normally unemotional

> audience to cheers with an exposition of the virtues of American private enterprise in contrast with British Socialism. *The National Association of Manufacturers must be flabbergasted!* . . .

In the same issue of the *Auto Worker* there appeared the digest of an article by Monsignor Higgins which had originally been published in a Detroit Catholic periodical. In this article, Higgins went out of his way to defend Reuther against the charge that he was a socialist. He demonstrated that Reuther's policy of peaceful coexistence between "management," government and labour was good Catholic labour doctrine. The charge that Reuther was a socialist is unjust and Reuther deserves the respect of every Catholic priest and layman.

Another example: In 1957 the *New York Post* published a series of biographical articles on David Dubinsky. The fourth article in the series reveals that Dubinsky had been *appointed* Secretary Treasurer of the ILGWU in 1929 and President in 1932, having held both these posts ever since. The Post interviewer recorded his conversation with Dubinsky on this point:

> . . . I asked Dubinsky whether he was not troubled, at least philosophically, by such concentration of

> power. It is characteristic of him that he was completely untroubled. 'Sure', he concluded, '. . . with a crooked President, it is good to have an independent Secretary Treasurer. But in an honest union, what's the problem?'
>
> . . . he had a similar lack of anxiety about the ease with which the General Executive Board can discharge local officials. Every paid official, prior to assuming his duties, has to submit resignation to International headquarters. One need not be a legal expert to see that this provision could easily be used to victimise a dissident faction of the union . . . 'Can it be misused?' 'Sure. I concede the point. I'm not worried about my successor. . .' [Obviously, Dubinsky implied that he would designate his successor and see to it that he will abide by his standards.]

The alternatives to democratic self-rule - in unions as well as society at large - is the dictatorship of a minority. Every leader is a potential dictator, and once they get sufficient power, they will not let it slip from their hands. They build a "machine" to help them stay in office. No matter how bad a situation may be, the leaders do not want the members

to do the house-cleaning, as they might go "too far" and sweep *them* out of office.

The relations between the members and their leaders in these centralised business unions is a disrupted, unhealthy one. In the beginning, when a union is young, this may not be noticed; the seeds of degeneration need time to sprout and grow. Gradually, the union develops something resembling a military-type caste system. Any organization in which decisions are made at the top, and obeyed by the ranks below, transmitted through a chain of command, as in an army, is essentially totalitarian. It is not a true community of labour, which implies an association of equals making decisions and carrying them out jointly.

Union leaders themselves are neither better nor worse than other people. They may have the best intentions, even idealistic. Reuther, Dubinsky and so many others were once socialists, but the exercise of power over others corrupts and erodes their personalities. The original leaders may still retain a modicum of honesty and principles, being emotionally attached to the rank-and-file from which they have lately emerged. But as time goes on they--or in any case their successors--become decisively influenced by the company they keep. They enter into friendly relations with

the employers and unconsciously absorb the ethics of capitalist society. Very few individuals can resist the temptations of power and prestige, and those few never become good business unionists.

As the original leaders die or retire, they are succeeded by professional careerists and union politicians who are promoted from the lower ranks of the bureaucracy or brought in from the outside. These newcomers are even further removed from the workers on the job and are still more cynical. The process of degeneration continues until it is interrupted or broken by a revolt in the ranks. These facts, surprisingly enough, were confirmed in 1957, by a no less high union official than Lewis Hollander, President of the New York CIO and Manager of the Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (deceased), a "progressive" business union:

> In many unions there is little sign that the leaders are even trying to maintain contact with the membership. Some seem to feel that the union contract and the compulsory check-offs of union dues have made it unnecessary for them to know what the members want and need . . . too many such leaders live in a world apart, a world in which

> the badges of achievement are high salaries, expensive automobiles, membership in country clubs and other appurtenances of wealth...

This helps to explain why the attitude of many workers toward the leaders of their unions is similar to their attitude towards the President in the White House, the Governor of the State, the Mayor of the City or the Boss in the Office. The fact that millions of workers are indifferent to the affairs of their organisations, which involve their livelihood, shows how deeply the corruption in our society has penetrated. Bakunin's observations on these points, though written over a century ago (1871), remain timely:

> Even the best of men are rendered corruptible by the temptation of power . . having convinced themselves that what they like, is what the membership wants and needs . . . the leaders become despots, even while deluding themselves that they are actually working for the benefit of their victims... This illusion has particular unfortunate effects on the morality of the leaders themselves. . they become permanent chiefs whose power is sanctioned by what they falsely regard as their useful services and the length of their tenure

> in office ... it is clear that the absence of opposition and control becomes the source of … depravity for all individuals vested with social power … because of their ignorance and servile habits ... when they patiently endure humiliation ... the masses themselves create their own exploiters. (*Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 244, 245)

Corruption in Unions

Institutionalised corruption traces back to abuse of power by business agents or "walking delegates" in the 1880s (mostly in the building and other trades). These full-time representatives conducted the business of the union in scattered workplaces, which shifted as temporary jobs were completed. The business agent processed grievances, saw to it that employers abided by union agreements and did not employ non-union workers, helped organise non-union shops, etc. Actually, despite claims to the contrary, the business agent was not needed. He was a parasite who usurped the power of the workers on the job. Their shop-stewards on the job performed the business agents functions far better than he, without the built-in opportunities for self-enrichment and lust for power which

the post of business agent made possible. On this point, John Hutchison's "The Imperfect Union" is worth quoting:

> The position of the business agent was inherently powerful. He was usually the chief executive of his local union, vested with considerable personal authority. He was an employment agent of his members, and if his local union was well-organised, controlled the labour supply of the employers . . he was the chief interpreter of labour-management agreements. Most of all, he was empowered to call strikes without seeking the consent of the members. In some cases, union officials collected strike insurance from compliant or fearful employers in return for labour peace. There were always employers anxious to bribe, and union officials strong enough to extort.

In the building trades the corrupt business agent's machine - rewarding friends and punishing enemies - ruled their respective local unions in much the same manner as graft-ridden Tammany Hall politicians ruled New York and other cities.

For example, the dominant figure in the New York building trades was Samuel J. Parks. Parks was chief business agent

for the Structural Workers Union. Until his death, Parks remained on the payroll of both the union and Fuller Construction Co. In the case of the Hecla Iron Works, Parks demanded $2000 graft. When Hecla refused, Parks called the 1200 workers out on strike, declaring that the strikers will go back to work ". . when you pay Sam Parks $2000 ... you've never done anything for the walking delegates..."

When Parks was arrested the House Smith's union passed a vote of confidence in him and authorised payment of $1000 for legal expenses. The New York City Chief of Police bailed him out.

Early in the 1890s, the Chicago Trade and Labor Assembly was taken over by a group “. . . of self-seeking men who made the word 'labour leader' synonymous with 'crook' and 'grafter'.” (Hutchison) William C. Pomeroy, Business agent of the Chicago Waiter's Union dominated the Chicago Federation of Labor. In return for bribes he broke strikes.

Simon O'Donnel, former President of the Chicago Building Trades Council, collected "strike insurance" from construction companies and employed murderers, sluggers and bomb throwers to enforce his demand for money. Gangsters "Dopey Fein," Buchalter, and Shapiro extorted protection money from both the clothing union and

employers. The gangsters employed two hundred and fifty "collectors" and extorted five to ten million dollars a year for "protection."

Joseph A. Ryan, President of the International Longshoremen's Union (now retired), extorted 20% of workers' wages in kickbacks as a condition for employment and operated a lucrative loan sharking racket. All this, and more, was done in collusion with the employers and politicians.

In the 1920s and 1930s George Scalese, the notorious gangster and racketeer - a former pimp - for some time Vice-President of local 272 of the Teamsters Union, infiltrated and in many instances dominated garage and auto washers locals, retail clerks, beauty shop workers, Italian butchers and laundry workers locals.

Max Block, President of Local 342, Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher's Union and the District Council of New York and New Jersey, misappropriated millions of dollars from welfare funds. He and his brother, appropriated $95,000 to themselves for annuities and also became part owners of a number of food stores. Block spent $5000 of union funds for a wedding gift to his daughter, $9,362 for trips to Florida for himself and his wife. He stole $26,765

for "expenses" which he could not account for.

The racket ridden International Union of Operating Engineers, forced members in two locals to kickback 5% of their wages in addition to dues. Only 46% of the 240,000 duespaying members were allowed to vote. Hutchison remarks that “literally millions dollars vanished from the treasury reappearing in improved living standards for the big wigs.” William E. Fay, the Vice-President of the Operating Engineers Union was jailed for extorting $365,000 from employers. While in jail he and his wife received almost $100,000 from the union. Through business deals with employers he became wealthy renting machinery to contractors.

The career of William E. Maloney is, if anything, even more lurid than Dave Beck's (racketeering President of the Teamster, followed in office by James Hoffa). Sid Lens's detailed account of his career is, in part, well worth quoting:

> Maloney began his career in Chicago as a pauper and retired at the age of 72 under pressure of the Senate Rackets Committee and the AFL-CIO Ethical Practices Code. Maloney owned a huge estate at Elk Grove, Illinois, complete with a colonial house,

swimming pools and stables. He had at his disposal a $35,000 yacht supplied by the union and maintained at a cost of more than $12,000, three Cadillacs and one Chrysler Imperial and a Washington apartment in addition to his own mansion, all paid for by the union. The union also paid his dues at the racetracks, gave him a variety of other expensive gifts, and even shoes, shirts, and baked beans!

Maloney's whole history is inter-linked with gangsters and gangsterism. In his climb to power he was aided by hoodlums such as 'Three Fingered' Jack White, Charles Fischetti, George "Red" Barker and similar people. With their help, he was able to form Local 150 in Chicago, terrorise its dissidents and keep the Local under his trusteeship for twenty nine years. Those who opposed him were either frightened out of office or killed (*Crisis of American Labor*, p. 105-106).

Welfare and Pension Fund Racket

Even the sketchiest outline of corrupt practices in unions must include the rifling of welfare and pension funds by unscrupulous officials in league with professional criminals. Both the quotes and information on this point is gathered from Walter Sheridan's detailed work, "The Rise and Fall of James Hoffa":

> When James Hoffa, President of the Teamsters Union was one of the trustees of the pension fund, millions of dollars were loaned by the Fund for high risk ventures, many of which culminated in foreclosures. Millions of dollars were poured into hotels and mob controlled gambling casinos in Las Vegas. Other underworld figures profited from The Fund by receiving loans themselves or being cut in on the substantial cash kickbacks that were a condition of many loans. It was the biggest slush fund in history, used by Hoffa as a power vehicle for the benefit of himself, his associates and the mob. .

Hoffa was indicted for defrauding the pension fund of almost two million dollars. In collusion with Allan Hoffman, whose New York State insurance license was revoked, Hoffa shared almost one million dollars in commissions

Vaughan Connolly, a former owner of the Everglades Hotel in Florida, received a four million dollar loan for the Pension Fund for which he kicked back ten percent to be split between Hoffa and his lieutenant, Dranow.

A twenty eight count indictment (June 4 1963) revealed that Hoffa and others obtained by fraud, fourteen loans totalling twenty million dollars, from which they diverted one million dollars for their personal benefit. Legal expenses to defend Hoffa were paid by the union.

Gangster James Diogardia received a $900,000 "loan" from the Pension Fund. The Secretary-Treasurer of the Laundry Workers Union, Jimmy James and other union cheifs, in collusion with insurance broker, Louis Saperstein, embezzled over one million dollars in welfare funds.

Hoffa's predecessor, Dave Beck arranged a million and a half dollar loan to the Freuhauf Trailer Company. Freuhauf reciprocated by "loaning" [kicking back] two hundred thousand dollars to Beck, buying him a boat, providing him with a car and chauffer and paying for a six week tour in Europe for Beck's niece and her travelling companion.

Between 1954 and 1957 Hoffa took over $85,489 from a Detroit Good and Welfare Fund and gave it to the wives of four teamster officials in jail for extortion, and another

$30,000 for their legal fees $54,000 was spent to defend Gerald Donnelly of Minneapolis Local 548 convicted of extortion and dynamiting. Hoffa used his influence to get a charter in the Hotel and Restaurant Union for Sam Feldman, a safecracker, after he was released from jail.

In one welfare fund, more than $900,000 disappeared without trace. In Teamster Local 895 there was no money in the welfare fund even though $250,000 had been collected from employer contributions. United Culinary, Bar, and Grill Employees, Local 923, paid two union administrators almost as much in salaries as in total benefits to members.

[Postscript: James Hoffa was murdered by his former gangster allies because he wanted to recapture his lost leadership of the Teamster Union.]

Corruption In The National Maritime Union: Joseph Curran.

Joseph Curran, one of the chief organisers of the NMU in 1936 and still (1969) its only President, began his career as a boatswain (foreman). A good speaker, active in the 1936 strike, and well liked by the seamen, he was elected

President of the NMU by the Communist Party, which controlled the rank-and-file electorate.

After ten years, during which time Curran faithfully followed the Communist Party line (without whose support, he could not remain in office), Curran expelled his Communist Party allies and amended the constitution of the NMU to read:

> . . . anyone who subscribes to, supports, sponsors, or otherwise follows a course of action demonstrating membership in or adherence to the policy and program of the Communist Party or any other totalitarian or subversive doctrine shall be expelled from the NMU . . .

From a revealing exposure of Curran by M.A. Varick, for twenty-nine years a member of the NMU, we extract the following:

- Joseph Curran may well rank as the most corrupt figure in the top labour bureaucracy.
- His name is hewn in the rock of the seven million dollar building and annex of the Joseph Curran Building (national office of the NMU).
- Curran owns a winter residence in Boca Raton, Florida

and a summer residence in Dutchess County, New York.

- NMU Patrolmen (business agents) originally elected by the members are now appointed by Curran.
- The Patrolmen concentrate on collecting dues ($120 a year). In addition, the men are bulldozed to buy "fighting fund stamps" at five dollars for each stamp. The money has been used to pay ten thousand dollars for a university banquet honouring Curran, plus another five thousand dollars for a schoolroom named after Curran.
- One hundred dollars a year is extorted from pensioners on threat of withholding their pension checks. The five hundred thousand dollars extracted from this source found its way into the pockets of the officials.
- The leaders of the Curran machine park their NMU limousines in the building's underground garage and take a private elevator to their luxuriously decorated offices . . . (*New Politics Quarterly*, Summer 1967).

[Postscript: Joseph Curran is presently retired and living in his ultra-luxurious Boca Raton Estate in Florida.]

West Coast Longshoreman's Harry Bridges

The same issue of New Politics carried an article by R.J. Pierpoint revealing how another Communist Party stooge, Harry Bridges, of the west coast International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) keeps his machine in power. He created a job trust of favoured "A" men, full members who are given the best paying, easiest jobs in reward for supporting Bridges; and class "B" men, who in spite of the fact that they pay full union dues and are under the jurisdiction of the union, are not allowed to join the union! They are denied voice and vote and are allowed to attend meetings only when they are sitting in a segregated section of the meeting hall. If, and when, they are finally promoted to full class "A" membership, they must first prove that they are faithful supporters of the Bridges machine.

John L. Lewis: Architect of the CIO

Because Lewis was in the forefront of the struggle for "industrial unionism" and played a key part in the launching of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) he is held in great esteem in many "progressive" and even "radical" circles. Perhaps the best way to expose the true

nature of the CIO is to trace the career of its founder, John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

The parent union of the UMWA was the National Federation of Mine Laborers. As stipulated in its constitution (1885), the Federation consisted of Lodges (Locals) and districts which vigilantly defended their independence from the domination of the National Office. Their insistence on autonomy and unity through federation (free agreement) was in keeping with the finest libertarian traditions of the American Labor Movement.

Lewis's predecessors as President of the UMWA, John Mitchell and Frank Hayes, tried to curtail the autonomy of the locals and centralize the structure of the union, but did not wholly succeed. But Lewis, despite formidable opposition, succeeded. When Lewis became President in 1919 he did away with the federalist structure of the union, rooted out autonomy and self-determination of locals, centralized and took complete control of the union. (see Morton S. Baratz; the Union And the Coal Industry, p. 76 and Saul Alinsky's very friendly biography, John L. Lewis).

Professor J .B.S. Hardman wrote that:

> . . Lewis made his drive for power without any

> concern for the Miners' democratic traditions and individual ways. He let nothing stand in the way of the authority and power he was after. He tolerated no dissent, whether by members or second line leaders, in the internal life of the union or in the shaping of policy in union industry relations (*John L . Lewis: Labor Leader and Man*--essay).

Lewis amended the constitution, giving him, the President, the full power to amend the constitution and suspend or remove any official for insubordination. He told the 1944 UMWA Convention that he was;

> . . . sick and tired of these elected officers in some districts, when we ask them to do something, and have them tell me 'Why, I am autonomous.' What the hell do I care whether they are autonomous or not? I want action. I want service. I want loyalty. . . (Hardman).

Ruling The CIO

Lewis ruled the CIO in the same despotic manner as he did the UMWA. He appointed all members of the CIO Organizing Committees. Most important posts were filled

by his lieutenants from his UMWA. The Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) was headed by a vice-president of the UMWA, Philip Murray. The Packing House Organizing Committee by another UMWA official, Van A. Bittner, and so on.

Organizing Committees had no rights whatever. They were not allowed to set policy, negotiate contracts, call strikes or vote on any substantial issue without the express approval of Lewis. Thus, in 1937, Lewis appointed Harry Bridges President of the west coast Longshoremen's Union, to become Director of the West Coast CIO organization without consulting anyone--not even CIO Vice-President Sidney Hillman. Lewis' associates learned of the appointment through the newspapers. Lewis negotiated contracts behind closed doors, with the corporations in the utmost secrecy.

This is how Lewis negotiated an agreement within Myron C. Taylor, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the United States Steel Corporation Taylor recalls that:

> for a time... the secret negotiations seemed to be off. But on Sunday morning, Mr Lewis and Mr. Murray came to my house and after a short talk accepted the formula for recognition of the SWOC in

principle...

Lewis elatedly declared that the ". . . settlement was made possible by the far-seeing vision and industrial statesmanship of Myron C. Taylor...." The New York World Telegram (March 4,1937) revealed that ". . . two financiers closely identified with the Morgan interests, said that they had only praise and admiration for Mr. Lewis...."

Five years before in the 1932 strike, when the members rejected a proposed agreement by referendum vote, Lewis, against the expressed will of the strikers, signed a secret agreement with the coal operators. And it was this cynical disregard for the most elemental principles of democracy which led to the split in the UMWA and the formation of the Progressive Mine Workers. In the forty years of his Presidency (1919-1959) every strike was settled by him in person or by orders to his lieutenants.

Employer-Labor Co-operation: Lewis Style

In spite of the fact that the UMWA was always an industrial union, it has a long record of collaboration with employers every bit as shameful as any of the AFL craft unions. The UMWA was affiliated to the AFL for many years and its

leadership was permeated with the "business unionist" spirit of Gompers. A few examples of the Lewis brand of "industrial unionism": in the anthracite strike that began September 1, 1925, Lewis demanded the establishment of the checkoff system, which Daniel De Leon graphically described:

> . . . the check-off turns the employer into a union officer, seeing that he checks off from the pay envelopes, the dues and assessments and other money obligations of the men to the union, and turns the same over to the union treasury the employer is turned into a sort of financial secretary of the union . . .

In return for the check-off, Lewis signed a five year no-strike agreement, ignoring the demands of the miners for more wages and better working conditions. While the anthracite miners were on strike, the soft-coal bituminous miners--members of the same union--were busy digging bituminous coal which was being used as a substitute.

Business circles reacted enthusiastically to the strike settlement. Their organ, *The New York Times*, waxed lyrical:

> . . . Strikes being virtually excluded, the operators have no objections to the check-off; throughout, they have shown a willingness to strengthen and build up the union in all its legitimate activities....

The Times also carried the following dispatch:

> . . . Philadelphia, Feb. 12--a huge basket of roses was sent tonight to John Llewelyn Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers, by mayor W.W. Ingles, Chairman of the Anthracite Operators Negotiating Committee. With the flowers was a card which pointed out that besides marking the end of the strike, it was the birthday of the miner' leader and another great American, Abraham Lincoln.... (see Eric Hass; John L. Lewis Exposed, Socialist Labor Party pamphlet)

In his book, *The Miners Fight For American Standards* (1925) Lewis pleaded for "... unity between Capital and Labor . .. only a full partnership could save our economic system . . . the policy of the UMWA ought to have the support of . . . every thinking business man in America . . . broad minded operators realize that were the UMWA to crumble . . . they would be replaced by something far more

sinister and radical.... "

In a radio address on Sept. 7, 1936, Lewis repeated that the labor unions were grounded on the right to private property. The CIO is ". . . dedicated to the proposition of the right of the investors to have a profit on their investments..."

In June 1948, Philip Murray, Lewis' closest associate who succeeded him as President of the CIO declared:

> . . . in fact we have no classes in this country . . . we are all workers here . . . even the division of workers into management and 'labor' turns out to be artificial. Management involved plenty of labor, and labor involves considerable management.... (article in *American Magazine*)

CIO Deceives Workers

The CIO came to power by exploiting and diverting into safe capitalist channels, the massive strike movement of the millions of workers in the mid 1930s. Sid Lens observes that:

> . . . leaders of both AFL and CIO were agreed on the necessity for circumscribing the increased militancy

> in the basic industries . . . no one in the AFL or the CIO was under any illusion that Lewis, Hiliman and Dubinsky were out to build a radically new kind of movement.... (quoted, John Zerzan in Telos, quarterly, Spring 1975)

Sid Lens emphasized that

> . . . it was the mood of the rank-and-file that made possible the CIO and unionization . . . there were only four CIO organizers in the Detroit area before the sit-down strikes and the sit-downs came as a complete surprise to Murray and Hillman . . . in 1930, five years before the organization of the CIO, the number of spontaneous sit-down strikers was 158,000; in 1933, 812,000; and in 1934, 1,353,608.... (*The Crisis of American Labor*, p. 181)

In regard to the great spontaneous sit-down strikes that shut down the General Motors system, the Harvard economist J. Raymond Walsh stated flatly that the CIO had certainly not called the strikes. Wellington Roe, who participated in the strikes, wrote that:

> . . . the CIO high command . . . tried in vain, to prevent the strikes . . . the public was led to believe

> that Lewis was the originator of the sit-in strikes . . . actually Lewis had no more to do with the sit-in strikes than some native of Patagonia.... (quoted, Zerzan)

Frances Perkins, President Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor wrote:

> . . . I know for a fact that John Lewis and Sidney Hillman and Lee Pressman (Chief CIO lawyer) made great efforts to get the men to leave the plants.... (She also recalls Roosevelt's advice to a group of business leaders) you should not be afraid to have the CIO organize in your factory . . . they don't want to run your business. You will probably get a lot more production and a lot more peace and happiness if you have a good union organization and a good contract.... (quoted, Zerzan)

In 1937 Lewis assured the employers that ". . . a CIO contract is adequate protection against sit-downs, lie-downs, or any other kind of strike..." At the 1935 convention of the AFL, Lewis and Charles P. Howard (deceased), President of the Typographical Union, who helped organize the CIO, urged the AFL to accept

organization of workers in the mass-production industries into industrial unions. Howard warned the delegates that:

> . . . the workers of this country are going to organize, and if they are not permitted to organize under the banner of the American Federation of Labor, they are going to organize under some other leadership. And if either of these conditions should eventuate, I submit to you that it would be a far more serious problem for our government, for the people of this country and for the American Federation itself than if our organization should be so moulded that we can organize them under the leadership of this organization....

Lewis told the convention:

> . . . I stand here and plead for a policy . . . that will protect our form of government against the (radical) isms and philosophies of foreign lands that now seem to be rampant in high and low places throughout the country...

According to the organ of big business (Business Week--June 7, 1958) the corporations accepted the CIO brand of "industrial unionism" because as a matter of policy, the

mass-production industries prefer to bargain with a strong international union able to dominate its locals and keep them from disrupting production.

As far back as 1926, Gerald Swope, President of General Electric Corporation, tried to persuade the AFL to organize a nation-wide union of electrical workers on an industrial basis. Swope believed than an industrial union "... would mean the difference between an organization which we can work with on a business basis, and one that was an endless source of difficulties...." The difficulties Swope had in mind were negotiating separate contracts with different local unions in the same plant or vicinity, whose contracts expire and must be renegotiated at different times which could prolong strikes and halt production indefinitely.

The implementation of the CIO brand of "industrial unionism" necessitated the creation of a highly centralized bureaucratic organizational structure which practically emasculated control of the union by the membership.

Fake "Leftists"

While the "achievements" of the self-styled "leftists" who helped build up the pro-capitalist CIO has been widely

hailed; their treachery has not been adequately exposed.

To give the CIO, in keeping with the times, a mildly "radical" coloration and thus neutralize leftist opposition, Lewis placed thousands of "progressives" and "radicals" on the payroll. He even employed some opponents to his UMWA dictatorship, whom he had expelled, dumping them when he no longer needed them. Leaders of progressive "socialistic" unions (Sidney Hillman, David Dubinsky, Leo Krzyki and others) also held high posts in the CIO.

Attracted by Roosevelt's "welfare" state program, members of the Socialist Party left the party en masse to join Roosevelt's liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Hordes of job hunters and careerists; "progressives," socialists, communist, etc., each for their own reasons, joined the CIO crusade. In addition to the powerful backing of the Roosevelt administration, millions of dollars supplied by the miners and other unions were poured into the organizing campaign.

The IWW, the little impoverished radical groups and isolated individuals, who fought so valiantly to expose the CIO fraud and uphold the honor and integrity of the revolutionary labor movement were simply overwhelmed by the formidable counterrevolutionary coalition.

Sidney Hillman: Associate Architect of the CIO

In 1938, Sidney Hillman, Vice-President of the CIO, summed up his "partnership between labor and capital" creed, which he practiced throughout his long career:

> . . . Certainly, I believe in collaborating with the employers! That is what unions are for. I even believe in helping an employer function more productively. For then, we will have a claim to higher wages, shorter hours, and greater participation in the benefits of running a smooth industrial machine... (Matthew Josephson; *Sidney Hillman: Statesman of Labor*, p.439)

In 1911, Hillman worked out a strike settlement with the clothing manufacturers, Hart, Schaffner and Marx, for the prevention of strikes, by submitting all disputes to an arbitration board consisting of the union, an employer representative, and an "Impartial Chairman." The agreement stressed that “peaceful collective bargaining grows out of the will to understand, respect, and possibly even support the specific interests of the other side.” (Josephson, p.60)

The union pledged that it would do everything in its power,

to increase production, promote efficiency, better machinery, and even to speed up production by instituting the infamous "speed-up" system. For this he was bitterly denounced by the rank-and-file members of his union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA). The union was willing to help the clothing manufacturers solve their production problems in Chicago, Rochester, and elsewhere, on the false pretext that:

> . . . a firm and its workers are in the same boat. Workers cannot get good wages unless the employer makes a satisfactory profit . . . as a result of advice by the union, needless processes on a coat are eliminated; deficiencies in organization are corrected--even at times--at the *sacrifice of some workers*... (Josephson, my emphasis, p. 467)

In accordance with this position the sentence to the preamble of the ACWA Constitution, concerning working-class control of the system of production was later eliminated.

Hillman had the dubious distinction of formulating both the structure and measures later adopted, in the main, by the "New Deal" welfare state government of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt grasped the advantage of enlisting

the services of a man like Hillman, whose ideas parallelled his own. Hillman became Roosevelt's unofficial adviser on labor policy and unofficial link between his administration and the labor movement. As President of the ACWA, and later of the CIO, he exerted his immense influence for the benefit of the Roosevelt administration.

In 1937, the spreading wave of sit-down strikes alarmed Congress, which threatened to investigate the growing labor trouble. Hillman was summoned to the White House by Roosevelt who asked Hillman to get the CIO to cut down the number of strikes. Hillman assured Roosevelt that he would do so, and the threatened investigation was called off. In 1940 Roosevelt reminded Hillman that he expected him to keep labor in step. He also called upon him to rally Labor's support for his election campaign.

When Roosevelt launched the National Defense Advisory Council, and during the war years, he placed Hillman in charge of formulating and putting into effect the labor policies of the government. His over sympathetic biographer, Matthew Josephson, sums up Hillman's attitude:

> . . . his approach was sympathetic to 'Statism,' industry and labor must cooperate closely to carry

> out Roosevelt's program. If one or the other fails to do so . . . the State through its power of persuasion, or coercion, if necessary, must compel them to do so... (p 346)

In accordance with this policy, Hillman tried to justify Roosevelt when he ordered the army to break the strike at the North American Aviation's immense Englewood, California plant, driving back the pickets with fixed bayonets. Hillman denounced the strikers as “a small band of irresponsibles who defied their own auto workers International executives in the midst of a world war.” (Josephson, p. 544)

When two hundred and fifty CIO executives came to Washington to denounce the government's strikebreaking and other coercive policies, Lewis, this time, rightfully, bitterly castigated Hillman as “a traitor who was standing at Roosevelt's side when he signed the order to send in troops ... to stab labor in the back.” (quoted by Josephson, p.548)

Hillman is still revered by bourgeois historians, "enlightened" capitalists and "liberal" politicians as one of the great "labor statesmen" and labor leaders of modern times. A more objective assessment of his career will

identify him as the man who helped engineer the regimentation and subjugation of the labor movement by the all-powerful state. He will be identified as the man who helped forge the "labor front" of the welfare state.

Hillman And Gompers

Gompers and the AFL had always been against government interference and regimentation of the labor movement, not because he was an anarchist, but for the same reasons as the laissez-faire "free enterprise" capitalists; whose "rights" Gompers and the AFL wholeheartedly endorsed, i.e., the unhampered right to exploit the workers at will.

Like the "free enterprisers," Gompers too, opposed governmental social-security, unemployment insurance and other welfare programs. Probably, as his sycophantic biographer, Philip Taft, observes:

> the increased importance of government economic affairs during World War One and the friendliness of the Wilson administration towards organized labor, softened the anti-government attitude of AFL leaders....

The "welfare" statist Hillman's conduct during World War

Two, did not differ substantially from Gompers' behavior during World War One. It could be said--not without reason--that Gompers set the example later followed by Hillman. For example: Hillman, like Gompers in August 1916, helped set up a National Defense Council, in preparation for World War Two, and Hillman, like Gompers, became Chairman of the Labor Division.

Like Gompers in 1917, Hillman too, called a conference of "management, labor, and the public to discuss increased production, freeze wages, prohibit strikes," and, like Gompers, also work out an "...effective way of allaying increased spreading of discontent in industry..." And like Gompers, Hillman too, advocated measures to ". . . oppose the influence of anti-war elements within the labor movement..." (see Philip Taft; *The AFL In The Time Of Gompers*, pp. 345-346, 342, 358-359)

Rise of "Welfare" Statism

The great depression of the 1930s marked the collapse of "Private Enterprise" Capitalism. It also sparked the spontaneous uprisings of the "sit-in" strikes. The whole system of human exploitation was threatened. The political state saved itself, and all that was essential to capitalism,

doing what "private enterprise" could not do. Concessions were made to the workers, the farmers, the middle-class, while the private capitalists were deprived of some of their power.

In regulating the relations between the classes, the state increased its own power and the foundations of state-capitalist "welfareism" were laid. The state could not do this alone. It had to overcome the resistance of old-line capitalism, and hence, needed the cooperation of a mass labor movement able to control the restless workers. The government of Franklin Roosevelt enacted "favorable" labor legislation and gave "progressive" labor leaders a chance to fill their depleted treasuries with the dues and assessments of the newly organized workers.

At first the labor fakers of the craft unions would not cooperate. They resisted change because they shared the economic ideas of private capitalism. On the other hand, the conservative unions could not undertake an effective program of organizing the unorganized because of their antiquated organic structure and the jurisdictional problems it created. A split took place and the CIO was born.

Time is a great healer and twenty years blurred the

differences dividing the rival factions. The CIO was firmly established and the conservatives adjusted themselves to the fast that "welfareism" was here to stay. They must live with it, and those who could not would be eliminated. Both cliques of labor mis-leaders came to see the advantages of peaceful co-existence. There was, after all, no fundamental differences between them. The CIO admitted craft unions and the AFL gladly accepted dues from industrial unions. They were as two thieves who had long fought over the loot and finally worked out a settlement. The unified AFL-CIO was the result. Rival capitalists also form trusts when it pays them to do so. Greed and jurisdictional conflicts divide them but "enlightened" self-interest draws them together. The "ethics" of expediency are flexible.

The character and function of American unions have changed greatly. A state regulated economy needs a state regulated labor movement. The government will help the unions as long as the leaders can assure smooth cooperation of a docile labor force. The "welfare" state has come to assume ever greater social functions and has intervened on an ever greater scale in regulation and control of economic and social life. The state regulates and shows an increasing tendency to dominate the whole field

of social security, business, labor, crop and price supports, utilities, housing, etc.

This process was expanded and accelerated by World War 2, the Korean War, "defense" spending, foreign aid programs and prosecution of the "cold war" between the two great power blocs -- United States and Soviet Union. The bureaucratic administrative apparatus kept pace with the expansion of governmental-power. Individual liberty and local initiative diminished as state domination of society increased. This process continues inexorably regardless of the political party in power.

A similar development has been going on in the labor organizations. As the unions have increased in membership, as they converted themselves into job trusts and gone into the field of welfare, they have established a similar system within their own domain. The administrative machinery has grown in proportion. The labor bureaucracy, by itself or jointly with the employers, controls many billions of dollars in welfare funds. These funds are used to reinforce bureaucratic power and render the membership ever more dependent on the leadership.

The dictatorship of the leaders over the workers has been further reinforced by the vicious practice of industry-wide

bargaining on a national scale, long-term contrasts and the power to discipline dissident members.

Just as the citizen's rights are curtailed by the growing power of the state bureaucracy, so are the worker's rights curtailed by the ever-greater usurpation of power by the labor bureaucracy. Subjected to the triple exploitation of the employers, the state, and the union dictatorship, the worker has ever-less to say about wages and working conditions. Instead of fighting for shorter hours and better conditions, the worker is forced to seek more overtime, and both husband and wife must work outside the home.

The merger of the AFL and CIO was an attempt to better fit the union structure to the needs of state capitalist "welfareism," which requires a maximum centralization over the working class. A military commander cannot tolerate jurisdictional disputes in the armed forces. The army must be firmly disciplined. It must obey as a unit. A regimented labor movement is a civilian army and jurisdictional rivalry cannot be tolerated.

The state drives toward complete control of society. This is inherent in its nature--especially in a period of crisis. State capitalist "welfareism" is exploitation streamlined. AFL-CIO unionism is business unionism streamlined. The

groundwork is being prepared for a totalitarian society in the United States and the AFL-CIO is already playing the role of "labor front" in the embryonic steep. When this process is completed, as it will be if not halted by worker's resistance on a massive scale, the unions will, as in Russia, be turned into mere puppets of the totalitarian state.

The AFL-CIO is now willing to accept "reasonable" legislation, which will of course, be enforced by the judicial and police powers of the state. Tyranny is crafty. It advances gradually, but relentlessly. Step-by-step the legal process proceeds, until labor is bogged down in the legal quicksand. The dictatorship of the state can be imposed just as readily by a "labor party" or by "welfareism." The difference will in the last analysis be superficial. Monopoly of power has its own logic; its own rhythm; it is not concerned with labels.

The Statist Trap

The American workers are already beginning to pay a heavy price for allowing their misleaders to lure them into the statist trap. The bait was "favorable" labor legislation. First, came the "pro-labor" Wagner Labor Relations Act. This was followed by the "anti-labor" Taft-Hartley law. Now,

the government is going to enact yet another maze of laws which will finally strap the labor movement into the statist strait-jacket.

Since this essay was first written over twenty years ago, the growing regimentation of the labor movement and its impact on both the size and structure of the union bureaucracy is becoming more and more obvious. "Welfare statist" AH Raskin labor expert of the New York Times, takes note of this development.

> Traditionally and invariable . . . union leadership came out of the workplace. But a quite different trend has asserted itself . . . ever since Franklin D Roosevelt's "New Deal" put a bedrock of law under collective bargaining, union Presidents have had to be experts in an ever-expanding compendium of statutes covering every aspect of union function from minimum wages to plant safety. But the need for professional knowledge does not stop here. The mushroom of union treasuries welfare funds, and community involvement, obliges labor's men of power to master skills in banking, real estate, foreign trade, economics housing and politics... All big unions have built up sizable staffs of lawyers,

accountants, and other specialists to assist their policy makers in coping with these responsibilities...

By way of illustration: the original agreement between the united auto workers (UAW) and general motors corporation consisted of only *Nine paragraphs*. A few years ago the contract consisted of *Two Hundred Pages and One Thousand Paragraphs*. No member could possibly unravel the fantastically complicated terms of the contract. Only a highly trained expert in labor law, or better yet, a staff of labor lawyers, can draw up a contract and avoid the legal pitfalls into which the union would otherwise fail.

The President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Murry H. Finley, is a lawyer, as is the Secretary-Treasurer, John Sheinkman. The President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Sol Chaikin, is also a lawyer. The Secretary-Treasurer, Shelly Appelton and two Vice-Presidents, Harold Molisani and Wilbur Daniels are also lawyers. The employers regard these new leaders as ". . . very decent men..." (*New York Times* news item)

Thousands of specially trained officials and their staffs who never worked in industry, have already been added to the swelling bureaucracy, even further widening the gulf between the estranged members and the functionaries. At

the same time, the necessity of dealing with proliferating labor and welfare regulations multiplies the contacts between the union functionaries and their fellow bureaucrats in the various government agencies.

Bureaucrats are by training, profession and environment authoritarian minded worshippers of the state. They have, as Bakunin put it "... contracted the fatal habit of obedience...." They conceive social change only within the limits of the laws and regulations decreed by the state. They could no more question the omnipotence of the state, than the Pope would question the existence of God.

"Free Enterprise" business unions and "welfare state" unions, with their bureaucratic administrative apparatus, are themselves miniature states set-up to enforce the rules and regulations enacted by the leadership against members who dare revolt against their tyranny.

The Labor Party Illusion

The cry for a Labor Party is again being heard from all sides. Some of the Socialist Party people are agitating for it. The Trotskyites are currently in favor of it and [George] Meany (now deceased), President of the AFL-CIO, climbs on and off the band-wagon as the spirit moves him or as policy considerations dictate.

Agitation for a labor party is almost as old as the labor movement itself. Numerous beginnings in this direction have at times been made. In 1820, the Workingmen's Party in New York received 6,000 out of 21,000 votes cast, a higher proportion than any other independent movement has since achieved.

At times, the sentiment for a Labor Party has been confined to small radical and liberal groups on the fringes of the broader labor movement. At other times, powerful coalitions with a mass following, including unions and farmer's organizations, have organized large mass movements such as the Populists of the last century and the two "Progressive Parties" of Robert La Follette and Henry Wallace.

At the 1936 convention of the AFL, 104 delegates, representing a powerful bloc of unions, small, and large, came close to committing the Federation to working for the establishment of a Labor Party. Such a policy would have been the reversal of the traditional position which called for rewarding our friends and punishing our enemies," among the Republican and Democratic Parties. Other examples of Labor Party attempts have been the American Labor Party in New York State and the Farmer Labor Party in Minnesota and surrounding states.

In addition to those who have wanted a distinct political party of labor based on the unions, independent of and in opposition to the old line parties, there have been organizations such as the Socialist Party, that oscillated between running their own candidates and supporting capitalist "friends of labor." Despite their differences, all the radical tendencies supporting parliamentary action by the workers base their attitudes on the belief that such action can in some way alleviate or cure social ills.

Those who favor independent electoral action by labor reason that "the United States is a democracy in which the majority rules. We, the workers, farmers, and small businessmen, are the majority of the people. We have

voted for the Republicans and the Democrats and they have betrayed us. We must now establish a political party controlled by ourselves and run our own candidates. They will surely be elected, since we have a majority. Then, the government controlled by us will legislate in our favor..."

At first sight this appears reasonable. What could be simpler? However, a closer examination reveals that this argument is based on fundamental political and economic misconceptions. The idea of a Labor Party is based on the widespread myth that in a democracy the majority rules. This is a myth that must be exposed.

Leon Blum, the eminent French politician, whose vast and unsavory experience qualifies him as an expert on the subject, remarked that:

> . . . the parliamentary regime is a regime of *parties*. Jean Jacques Rousseau, the philosopher of democratic government, would not endorse representative government as it is practiced today. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau wrote that the deputies of the people cannot and should not be the people's representatives. . . they can only be its servants. . . The moment that people give power to their representatives they abdicate their liberty. . .

The fundamental principle of *Every* political party, regardless of the form of government, is the same. V.O. Key, professor of government at Yale University, in his penetrating analysis, *Parties, Politics, and Pressure Groups* has this to say:

> . . .it is sometimes said that the method by which a party seeks to gain control of the government is the unique characteristic of the party or the group. The American party uses peaceful methods of campaigning and appeal for to gain power, which is said to differentiate it from other factions. . . .which struggle for power by use of military force. . .
>
> . . . the theory is advanced that the modern party and the democratic electoral process are but a sublimation, perhaps temporary, of the tendency to resort to force to gain control of the government. This theory gives a clue to the nature of the party struggle. The term "party" is applied equally to the peaceful parties of America and the Communist Party of Russia, the Nazi Party of Germany, and the Fascist Party of Italy. The methodology of these parties varies, but their fundamental objective--to place and keep their leaders in control of the

government--is the same. . .

A capitalist democracy is a competitive society where predatory pressure groups struggle for wealth and prestige and jockey for power. Because such a society lacks inner cohesion, it cannot discipline itself. It needs an organism which will appease the pressure groups by satisfying some of their demands and prevent conflicts between them from upsetting the stability of the system. The government plays this role and in the process enacts more and more laws. The bureaucratic governing apparatus thus becomes a class in itself with interests of its own, and becomes ever-more firmly entrenched as it extends its influence.

The end result of this process will be reached when the state assumes ownership and/or control over the whole of society establishing state capitalism, or if you prefer, state "socialism."

At this stage in its drift toward totalitarianism, governing groups cannot rule alone. They need the financial and moral support at any given time, of the most of the influential power groups: the financiers, the labor movement, the farmers, the press, the Church, as well as the military and civilian bureaucracies. Despite their differences, all these groups and institutions are inter-

dependent and no one of them can stand alone without leaning on the others. Parliamentary democracy, is at this stage, the political system which safeguards the unjust economic and social order.

The actual rulers in a parliamentary democracy are the professional politicians. In theory they are supposed to represent the people, but in fact they rule over them. They do not represent. They decide. This is why Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the anarchist thinker, said, ". . . Parliament is a king with 600 heads. . ." The political parties, or more accurately, the inner clique that controls them, select the candidates for whom the people vote. The candidates express the will of the party and not that of the people.

The platforms of the contending parties are adjusted to trick the voters into balloting for their candidates. Then the immense machinery of mass hypnotism goes into high gear. The press, the radio, television and the pulpit brainwash the public. The stupefied voters cast their ballots for candidates they never nominated and never knew, whose very names they forget, and whose platforms they have never read. The electoral swindle is over. The voters go back to work (or to look for work) and the politicians are free to decide the destinies of the millions as they see

fit. The democratic system is actually a dictatorship periodically renewed at election time.

Political machines seek to perpetuate themselves by all sorts of tricks. They sidetrack, channelize and emasculate the popular will. New politicians try to displace old ones by changing electoral laws; while entrenched politicians defend outworn electoral systems when they feel that the new laws might weaken their positions and perhaps even abolish their sinecures.

For example, the politicians in the big cities are incensed at the politicians from the rural areas who control many state legislators, because they dictate to the cities and deprive them of revenue. Representation in many state legislatures is not relative to actual population but according to districts or counties. These arrangements were made when America's population was predominantly rural. Since then the growing population is concentrated in the cities. Yet, representation remains the same. *The Painter and Decorator* of June, 1960, in an article titled "All Votes Are NOT Equal," gives many examples, such as:

> . . . fewer than 300 inhabitants of Union, Connecticut, have the same number of representatives in the state's lower house as the

> city of Hartford, with a population of over 177,000--giving each Union voter the strength of 685 Hartford voters. Business groups generally defend unequal representation. They have learned that the conservative philosophy of small town lawyers and business men is closely in line with their own views. Also rural legislators may always be counted on to oppose the objectives of organized labor....
>
> . . . such inequities are a major factor in American politics . . . in the South, political machines have used the county-unit system to become self perpetuating. In many Northern states, high city populations have been denied proportional voice and vote in enacting legislation essential to their survival...

Labor parties are no more immune to the diseases inherent in the parliamentary system than are other political parties. If the new Labor Party legislators are elected, they will have to "play the game" according to the established rules and customs. If they are honest, they will soon become cynical and corrupted and will be swallowed up by the machine. Most of them, however, will find their new environment to their taste because they have already

learned to connive when they were operating as big wheels in their own union organizations. The administration of most labor unions are patterned after governmental forms of political parliamentary democracy. A course in the school of labor fakery prepares the graduates for participation in municipal, state and national government. When they take political office, they will not represent the union members, but rather, the political machine that controls their labor organization.

By way of illustration, let us assume that a strong Labor Party in the United States has finally succeeded in electing thousands of local, state and national officeholders--as has happened in England, France, Germany and other countries. The history of parliamentary labor and socialist party movements in Europe gives us a good idea of what is most likely to happen to a similar movement in the United States .

The record of the Labor Government which ruled Britain from 1945 to 1951 proves that it betrayed every socialist principle and violated nearly all its pre-election pledges. These betrayals were reflected in both its domestic and foreign policies. The direction of Labor Government policy was clearly formulated by a high Labor Party official, Sir

Hartley Shawcross, in February 1946:

> . . . I take the opportunity of making it quite clear that this government like any other government as an employer, would feel itself perfectly free to take disciplinary action that any strike situation which might develop demanded. . .

The Labor Party had pledged itself not to use troops as strikebreakers. Only six days after coming to power the Labor Government ordered troops to break the strike of the London dock workers. This was repeated three months later. The government also decreed wage freezes and compulsory arbitration.

The principle behind these domestic policies also guided the Labor Party government's action in foreign and colonial affairs. Before dropping the atom bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in August 1945, President Truman had obtained the approval of the British Labor Government. The military adventures in Greece, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Korea, and elsewhere caused an increase in military spending from 692 million pounds in 1948 to 1032 million pounds in 1951. One hundred and thirty six Spanish anti-fascists were deported into the arms of Franco to certain imprisonment, perhaps torture and death.

The Labor government's defeat in the last general elections was primarily due to the justified disappointment to the workers with its actions and policies while in office. In 1945, Arthur Greenwood (Labor Government Privy Seal) declared:

> . . . I look around my colleagues and I see landlords, capitalists and lawyers. We are a cross-section of the national life and this is something that has never happened before. . .

It is impossible for any political party of "Labor" to reach power without concessions to the "right," to the middle class and other groupings thereby violating basic principles. Labor or Socialist parties lose their identity and eventually are found to differ only on relatively minor points from the non or anti-labor contenders for power. Labor Partyism is class collaboration in the political field and it is just as disastrous for the working class as class collaboration on the economic field. There is every reason to believe that the same fate would befall an American Labor Party if one is established. Advocates of a Labor Party in the United States could profit by the lessons of the British Labor Party.

In the competition for votes, the original ideals and

principles would be forgotten. The thousands of new officeholders would become a conservative force deeply imbedded in the established order--married to their careers. They would be constrained to establish rapport with the business community, with the agricultural interests, the clergy, with the middle-class whose support they will need for the enactment of measures advanced by them in exchange for like enactment of legislation advanced by other political parties and factions. The Labor Party would be swamped by hordes of lawyers, bourgeois intellectuals, liberal churchmen, politicians. Office seekers and other careerists, who would infiltrate and alter the character of the Labor Party beyond recognition. The honest workers and radical elements would be forced into the background. Of "labor" only the name would remain. The once proud Labor Party would inevitably degenerate into just another party in the machinery of the state. Such, in outline has been the fate of past Labor Party attempts.

In 1871, the 640,000 member National Labor Union, strongly influenced by Marxist ideas, organized a labor party (National Reform Party). Historian Ely writes that the organization "Died of politics." Though written in 1913 by Morris Hiliquit, a founder of the Socialist Party, his

assessment confirms our observations and remains relevant:

> . . . the fate of the Labor Party was the fate common to all independent political parties formed by American trade unions before and after it. As soon as it acquired appreciable strength, it was invaded by professional politicians, who entangled it in alliances with political parties. Its platform was gradually watered, its class character obliterated, its identity obscured, and finally it merged into one of the dominant political parties. . .

Hiliquit thought that his party would escape the same fate. But socialist parties in Italy, France, the United States and elsewhere conclude alliances with, and campaign for, candidates of bourgeois non socialist parties

Matthew Wohl, deceased Vice-President of the AFL (himself a first-rate conniver) in the debate with the labor party bloc at the 1936 convention, in an unguarded moment, let the cat out of the bag:

> . . . I have watched these politicians in our movement. I followed their methods and regardless of how they talk of their trade union loyalty, my

> experience has been that when they enter the political arena they begin to talk like politicians, and very soon thinking like politicians, to the desertion of every trade union activity they pledged themselves to become part of. . .

The various factions inside the American labor movement were always sharply divided on the question of parliamentary action in general and the labor party in particular. There are factions who believe in the class-struggle and also in parliamentary action.

In our opinion, tactics must flow from principles. The tactic of parliamentary action is not compatible with the principle of class struggle. Class struggle in the economic field is not compatible with class collaboration on the political field. This truth has been amply demonstrated throughout the history of the labor movement in every land. Parliamentary action serves only to reinforce the institutions responsible for social injustice--the exploitative economic system and the State.

The strength of the labor movement lies in its economic power. Labor produces all wealth and provides all the services. Only the workers can change the social system fundamentally. To do this, the workers do not need a labor

party, since by their economic power they are in a position to achieve the Social Revolution, the indispensable precondition for human progress. As long as the means of production are in the hands of the few and the many are robbed of the fruits of their labor, any participation in the political skullduggery which has as its sole purpose the maintenance of this system amounts to both tacit and direct support of the system itself. By electoral participation in any form, radicals actually become accomplices in the fraud.

The American labor movement today is reactionary. Almost all the unions are tyrannically controlled by unprincipled bureaucrats, and not a few, by racketeers, whose ethics are those of the predatory social system in which they operate. They practice class collaboration and uphold the doctrine that the interests of the employer and his victims are identical. This is a secret to no one. In the August 1958 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, Dick Bruner, ex-political staff executive of the CIO, wrote:

> The labor movement lacks its own ideas. On many of the most fundamental political and social issues, it is hard to distinguish labor's position from that of the National Association of Manufacturers. It has

> adopted the mass market concept of the big corporations, and its leaders treat the rank-and-file with contempt. . .

Any serious Labor Party that is formed will be under the domination of this corrupt, collaborationist union bureaucracy. The same leaders who repeatedly sold out the workers at the bargaining table will repeat their betrayals in the legislative bodies. Labor Partyism means class collaboration on the political field. The same disastrous results are inevitable since it involves making concessions to classes whose interests are diametrically opposed to the basic interests of the working class. Selig Perlman, the well known bourgeois minded labor historian, in his book, *A Theory of the Labor Movement* writes:

> . . . under no circumstances can labor afford to arouse the fears of the great middle class for the safety of private property as a basic institution. Labor needs the support of public opinion, meaning, the middle class, both rural and urban. . .

The middle class, as the name implies, allies itself not only with labor legislators, but also with the military faction, the financial interests, and other anti-labor pressure groups,

who also defend private property and also, when the middle class feels that it has something to gain, by allying itself with these interests. The Labor Party will then be forced to support its temporary middle class allies, for fear of retaliation when it needs middle class support to enact some of its own measures. This being the case, labor is bound to lose whatever independence and identity it did have, and eventually become just as corrupt as the old parties.

Those who are beating the drums loudest for the Labor Party are "radicals" of various Marxist or psuedo-marxist groups. These same people will tell you that they too, believe in economic action of the workers and the class-struggle. Some will explain that parliamentary action is necessary to supplement and make economic action more effective. Others, that it is only a gimmick to gain public attention, or free time on television and radio during the nominating and election period.

Nothing could be more dangerous to the worker's cause. Electioneering diverts the attention of the workers away from more militant struggles into essentially counter-revolutionary channels. It undermines confidence in their most effective weapon, their economic power. In his

valuable work *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, Rudolf Rocker, deals with this problem in the following terms. It is worth quoting at length:

> . . . all the political rights and liberties which people enjoy today, they do not owe to the goodwill of their governments, but to their own strength... Great mass movements and whole revolutions have been necessary to wrest these liberties from the ruling classes, who would never have consented to them voluntarily. *What is important is not that governments have decided to concede certain rights to the people, but why they had to do so.*
>
> . . . if Anarcho-Syndicalists nevertheless reject participation in national parliaments, it is not because they have no sympathy with the political struggles in general, but because its adherents are of the opinion that this form of activity is the very weakest and most helpless form, of the political struggle for the workers. . .
>
> . . . It is a fact that when socialist labor parties have wanted to achieve some political reforms they could not do so by parliamentary action, but were obliged

> to rely wholly of the economic fighting power of the workers. The political general strikes in Belgium and Sweden for attainment of universal suffrage are proof of this and, in Russia, it was the general strike of 1905 that forced the Czar to sign the new constitution.
>
> It was the recognition of this which impelled the Anarcho-Syndicalists to center their activity on the socialist education of the masses and the utilization of their economic and social power. Their method is that of direct action in both the economic and political struggle of the time. . . By direct action they mean any method of the immediate struggle by the workers against economic and political oppression. Among these the most outstanding are the strike in all its gradations, from the simple wage struggle to the General Strike, organized boycott and all other economic means which workers as producers have in their hands. . .

While the worker's most effective weapon--direct economic action--is being sharply curtailed, the labor movement is sinking deeper and deeper into the political swamp. Through its Political Action Committees, the unions waste

many millions of dollars in political campaigns for "favorable" candidates and lobbying for "favorable" legislation. The National Headquarters of the AFL-CIO as well as most of its affiliated unions are housed in Washington, D.C. close to the seats of power: the White House, the legislative chambers and the governmental bureaus. In the competition for votes, politicians from the President down to the local ward-heeler invite candidates to address their gatherings.

The labor movement is in deep crisis, because to a large extent, the membership is infected with the parliamentary virus. *The Labor Party Illusion Must Be Dispelled.*

Revolutionary Tendencies in American Labor

Introduction

In his classic analysis, *The IWW: A Study in American Syndicalism*, Paul Brissenden quotes from an editorial in the June, 1910 issue of the Industrial Worker (official organ of the IWW, Industrial Workers of the World) to substantiate his conviction that all ". . . the main ideas of modern revolutionary unionism as exhibited in the IWW may be found in the old International Workingmen's Association..." (IWMA, founded 1864) "Many items in the program originally drafted by the famous anarchist Michael Bakunin for the International in 1868, were very similar to the 20th century slogans of the IWW..."

Brissenden stresses that it is not to be inferred that the ideas of the revolutionary labor movement in general and the IWW in particular, were imported from Europe and grafted on to the American unions. The same principles and tactics grew out of the living experience of American workers on American soil. They were accepted because they corresponded to American conditions. The revolutionary libertarian concepts of class-struggle, federalism, direct economic action, local autonomy and

mutual aid are all deeply rooted in American labor traditions.

Our labor movement has a long and honorable record of heroic struggles. The great railroad strikes of 1877, the movement for the eight hour workday which culminated in the hanging of the Chicago anarchists and the general strike of May 1st, 1886 (now commemorated throughout the world as International Labor Day), the Homestead Steel strike in 1892 and the epochal battles of The American Railway Union in 1894, the anthracite miners' strike of 1902, the monumental strikes under the banner of the IWW, "Bloody Ludlow" in 1914, the great steelworker's strike of 1919, the southern textile strikes in 1929, the inspiring "sit-in" strikes in the 1930s--these are milestones on the onward march of the working class. It is these, and countless other revolts that have been responsible for all the gains made by labor. For example: the great railroad strikes of 1877 inspired Peter Kropotkin to write two articles in the *Bulletin of the Jura Federation* (Switzerland anarcho-syndicalist organ) from which we extract the following:

> . . . This movement will have certainly impressed profoundly the proletariat of Europe and excited its

> admiration. Its spontaneity, its simultaneousness at so many different points, communicating by telegraph, the aid given by the workers of different trades, the resolute character of the uprising from the beginning, call forth our sympathies, quicken our hopes....
>
> . . . would that this flowing of noble blood will prove once again the blindness of those who amuse themselves and the people with the playthings of parliamentarianism when the powder is ready to take fire, unknown to them, at the least spark....

Revolutionary unionism and socialist ideas developed in the course of these struggles. The workers came to realize that behind the boss stood the whole capitalist system--the courts, the state, the army, the police, the clergy, the schools and the press. They came to realize that these institutions must be abolished to be replaced by a free, just society.

Many militants, understandably preoccupied with economic struggles have underestimated the impasse of the deeper strivings which inspire the oppressed to revolt. Behind the struggle for bread lies the cry for justice. Behind the

struggle for better working conditions, lies the demand for individual freedom and human rights. Solidarity on the job and on the picket-line is the economic expression of the inborn feeling for mutual aid.

True socialism is much more than an economic doctrine. It is an ethical ideal. It cannot be imposed from above. It grows out of the feeling of brotherhood and is forged in the common struggle for noble aims.

The direct economic action tendency in the American labor movement rejected parliamentary action in favor of economic struggle. It rejected the idea of state control of industry in favor of worker' self-management and the replacement of the state by the economic organizations of the workers themselves.

Libertarian Spirit and Structure of Early American Labor Movement

Like all genuine people's movements the unions could be built only in one way--from below--by the organization of the workers on the job. Hence the labor movement at its inception took on, naturally, a decentralized federated form with the autonomous organization of the workers in the

various workplaces, localities, trades and industries bonded together in solidarity for mutual support. Within the local groups there was direct personal contact between the members. Decisions were arrived at by free agreement in open discussion. Most of the organizational work was voluntary and the few paid officials received no more than the average wage of the workers. Terms of office were limited and paid officials were in many cases required to go back to work in production for a definite period before being allowed to qualify for office again.

Whether on the union payroll or not, all officials and delegates had to carry out the instructions of the membership, by whom they could be recalled if they failed to do so. Decisions affecting large groups of workers were made by referendum vote. Negotiations with employers, calling and settlement of strikes, were decided by the rank-and-file workers on the job. Terms of the agreement were enforced directly by the workers themselves and grievances settled, if necessary, by means of sit-downs, slow-downs, boycotts or whatever other means the workers deemed most effective. These, and other safeguards against usurpation of power were developed by the workers in the course of their struggles.

The growth of the labor movement corresponded to the growing need of the workers for solidarity against the bosses and the boss-controlled state which opposed them at every turn. As local unions multiplied, they federated with each other to form larger groupings, while still retaining their autonomy and freedom of action within their own spheres. It was realized that all trades must cooperate if strikes were to be effective and workers demands achieved. Inter-city, state and national federations were formed to fill the need for greater coordination in the interests of all the workers.

The labor movement grew naturally into a vast interwoven network of local communities throughout the country, exercising a growing influence in their respective areas. And this early movement did not confine itself solely to immediate economic issues. Humanity is a social being. Cooperation, synonym for solidarity, is indispensable for survival and development. The mutual-aid functions of the unions expanded to keep abreast of the growing needs of the members. Neither the state nor the employers were concerned with the wants or feelings of the human beings whom they treated as mere commodities. So, the workers helped themselves by helping each other, spontaneously

and as the need arose.

They created a network of cooperative institutions of all kinds: schools, summer camps for children and adults, homes for the aged, health and cultural centers, insurance plans, technical education, housing, credit associations, et cetera. All these, and many other essential services were provided by the people themselves, long before the government monopolized social services wasting untold billions on a top-heavy bureaucratic parasitical apparatus; long before the labor movement was corrupted by "business" unionism.

The impact of these early unions was not limited to their own members. They also fought bureaucracy, racketeering and the class collaboration of the conservative unions, whose leaders were constantly being exposed and were forced to make concessions to the opposition. Over their heads there hung the ever-present threat of "dual unionism."

Erosion of Libertarian Spirit

As these libertarian tendencies evaporated, as the unions became "respectable," many of them became

electioneering agencies for political parties. Others became increasingly centralized and, with the crystallization of a bureaucratic crust, the cancer of business unionism took over. Then as a reaction to this, the libertarian tendency again made itself felt. The workers were compelled to establish new organizations that would be more responsive to their needs. For example, it was the failure of the AFL to organize semi and unskilled workers, its capitulation to the employing class and its insistence on creating an aristocracy of skilled workers, which created an artificial division in the ranks of labor and led to the creation of the IWW. In this connection, Mary K. O'Sullivan (who in 1892 became the first woman organizer of the AFL) commenting on the great IWW Lawrence strike in 1912 stresses this point:

> . . . Nothing was so conducive to the organization of the IWW as the methods used by the three branches of the AFL . . . Catholics, Jews, Protestants and unbelievers--men and women of many races and languages--were working together as human beings with a common cause. The AFL alone, refused to cooperate. . . as a consequence, the workers came to look upon the Federation as a force

> almost as dangerous to success of their strike as the employers themselves...
>
> . . . before the strike ended the American Federation of Labor organizations, by openly refusing to give help to anyone who refused to return to work, came to be looked upon as a trap designed in the interests of the mill owners to catch any workers who could be induced to desert their cause....

Notwithstanding their achievements, there is no point in idealizing the rank-and-file as if they were infallible. In addition to the massive opposition of the employers and the state, a great or even greater obstacle to development of revolutionary unionism was the gullibility and apathy of the membership.

"Mother Jones," one of the most selfless, militant figures in the history of American labor dedicated most of her long life (over ninety when she died) to the organization of the miners. She was also one of the founders of the IWW. Her life span covered the most important period in the development of American unionism. In the closing chapter of her auto-biography she sums up her impressions:

> . . . as l look back over the long, long years. I see

> that in all movements for the betterment of men's lives, it is the pioneers who bore most of the suffering. When these movements became popular, when they became established, others reaped the benefits. . . thus it has been with the labor movement. . . many of our modern leaders have wandered far from the thorny path of these early crusaders. Never, in the early days of the labor struggle would you find leaders wining and dining with the aristocracy. The wives of these early leaders took in washing to make ends meet . . . they shared the heroism and privation of their husbands.
>
> . . . the rank-and-file have let their servants become their masters and dictators ... the workers have now to fight their own leaders who betray them, who sell them out, who put their own advancement ahead of the working masses, who make of the rank-and-file political pawns.

The American labor movement as it exists today, is the result of the interaction, over many decades, of business unionism and the revolutionary libertarian tendencies. Its major defects stem from the former and its constructive

achievements come from the latter.

To better assess the path that should be followed for regeneration of the labor movement it is necessary to trace, in broad outline, the development of these constructive, potentially revolutionary tendencies.

Revolutionary Tendencies in American Labor: The 1830's

The revolutionary-syndicalistic coloration of the early union is aptly summarized in this passage from Mill's and Montgomery's *Organized Labor*:

> . . .The principle that economic power transcends all other kinds of power found substantiation in the experience of the American workers as well as in socialist theory, and the logical deduction from this principle was the principle of economic methods; while decades of alliances between the wage earners and the [capitalist classes] had engendered the conviction that the workers must have their own distinctive organization, that the fiction of harmony of economic interests with the [employing class] must be sternly rejected. Moreover, organization for

> economic--not political, or uplift, or broadly humanitarian, or "educational"--action must be spontaneous and voluntary.' (p 76)

The labor historians John R. Commons and Mill's and Montgomery indicate the surprising scope of the movement. In the 1830's a federation composed of local unions into city councils, and the affiliation of various trades into national trade unions was already far advanced. An attempt was even made to federate all labor organizations into "One Big Union." As early as 1833, fifteen trades were federated into city councils (Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston and elsewhere). And the local federations repudiated active politics and concentrated their efforts on economic solidarity.

In the 1830's, Thomas Skidmore, a self-educated mechanic and a disciple of Thomas Paine, published a journal, *Friend of Equal Rights*, and a book, *Right of Man to Property*. A typical passage reads:

> . . . inasmuch as great wealth is an instrument which is uniformly used to extort from others their property, it ought to be taken away from its possessors ... as a sword or pistol may be wrested from a robber...

> . . . the steam engine is not injurious to the poor when they can have the benefit of it . . . instead of being looked on as a curse, it could be hailed as a blessing . . . let the poor lay hold of it and make it their own . . . let them also in the same way appropriate the iron foundries, the cotton factories, the rolling mills, houses, churches, ships, goods, steamboats, trades of agriculture: as is their right... (quoted--Philip Foner, *History of Labor in the United States*, Vol.1, p.169)

Skidmore was not alone in these views. The feeling that not even election of labor candidates would change the situation was widespread. As far back as 1832 the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workmen anticipated the IWW industrial union principle of the "One Big Union." Foner declares that the Association "... made the first attempt to include all workers in a single association--factory workers, common laborers, and skilled mechanics..." (p. 105)

Although some groups favored petitions and legislative action, other important groups advocated strike action, including the General Strike. The New England Association, for example, urged the unions to accumulate strike funds.

In 1839 a General Strike shut down all New England shoe factories (see Foner, p. 211, 240).

Revolutionary Tendencies: 1840-1860

All interested in this topic should consult Norman Ware's *The Industrial Worker: 1840-1860*. We itemize his main points and summarize his comments:

- The labor movement of the 1850s achieved the emancipation of the workers from the tradition of "community of interests between employer and employee."
- Federated trade unionism was characterized by reliance on economic organizations and trade associations.
- The experience of American labor preceded and: anticipated socialist theory.
- Neither benefits nor wages agreements would be considered final. They would not stop short of complete reorganization of the economic system.
- Labor will no longer sell itself to the capitalists, but become its own employer, to own and enjoy itself the fruits of its labor.

- The wage system must be abolished and labor will be rescued from the domination of capitalism.

This idea of the antagonistic interests of the workers and their employers was of slow growth. But it is one of the characteristics that divided the workers and their point of view from the bourgeois non radical reformers. It was against their despotism--paternalistic or malevolent--that the industrial workers were in revolt. Ware notes that:

> . . . the American worker was not actually opposed to machinery. He was opposed to the method of introduction for exploitative purposes, in the hands of a group alien to the producers. For every protest against machine industry, there can be found a hundred against the new power of capitalist production and its discipline . . . like the other workers of the period, the factory operatives--men and women--felt that they were losing something of their dignity and independence . .

"To find the real spirit of the times, [writes Ware] it is necessary to read the labor papers and resolutions of the newly formed workers organizations..." From the mass of such material we itemize, a few typical examples:

- 1845: “We see a moneyed aristocracy hanging over us

. . . threatening annihilation to every man who dares question their right to oppress the poor and the unfortunate...” (*The Awl*, organ of the Shoemaker's union)

- 1842: Strikers in a mill took possession of the mill in spite of the opposition of their conservative fellows and the Mayor. The striker's wives were the most violent....
- 1845: “Prepare and adopt measures . . . to secure the rights and interests of the workers and hasten the accomplishment of the great industrial revolution ... the interests of capital and labor are opposed . . . the profits the capitalists reap from the labor of the workers must belong to the workers.” (*resolution of the New England Worker's Federation*).
- 1848: “Those who work in the mills should own them.”

Precursor of AFL Job Trust Unionism: the 1850s

Mill's and Montgomery deplore the reactionary trend which set-in in the 1850s. They note that there is an impressive difference between the "pure and simple" job trust unionism of the mid-1850s and the unionism of the 1830s and 1840s:

. . . stripped of universal and glowing ideals, without

> establishing a single labor paper to carry on the appeal to the country, the skilled trades settled down to the cold business of getting more pay for themselves by means of permanent and exclusive organizations . . . here begins the separation from common, unskilled labor, which eventually was to raise the pay of skilled mechanics far above the level of immigrant competition (*Organized Labor* Vol.1, p.575-576).

Degeneration of Libertarian Unionism

As indicated in the introduction, the pattern of the labor movement is marked by severe recurrent setbacks of the revolutionary tendency. (After protracted struggles, it re-emerges under another form.)

Lipsit, Trow and Coleman's study, *Union Democracy: The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union* (ITU) recapitulated how the libertarian structured rank-and-file unions lost their independence and gradually degenerated into bureaucratic dictatorships. It is worth quoting at length:

> . . . in 1850 printers joined together to form a

national trades organization The ITU is the oldest national union in USA... the formation of the national, and later, international [Canadian] organization did not mean the establishment of a powerful central office with power over the local affiliates... for a long time the union was a loose confederation of cooperating, but wholly autonomous locals... which did not require a central office or field staff...

. . . no full time officials were employed during the first thirty years of the ITUÍs existence. Each local operated more or less as an independent entity, with international cooperation secured through correspondence and annual conventions... the President of the ITU continued to work at his trade and secured a small honorarium (wage) for his services. With few exceptions, the President stepped down after one year terms... organization of the new locals was left largely in the hands of the existing locals, which were assigned responsibility for neighboring areas...

. . . but from the beginning of 1884, however, the character of the national union changed drastically...

the 1884 convention hired fulltime national organizers... the official functions and revenues of the ITU increased rapidly since the international officers continually sought greater control over organizing and strikes...

. . . by the first decade of the 20th century, the International Executive Council had the right to appoint an ever growing number of organizers without sanction, and could suspend or otherwise penalize locals who went on strike without permission of the international officers... the international officers and representatives were also authorized to take part in collective bargaining, negotiating on all local levels... since strikes could only be called with permission of the international officials, the ITU gradually became a virtual dictatorship...

. . . the administration of welfare, union printers homes for the sick in Colorado, old age pensions and mortuary benefits, etc., greatly increased the number of persons on the ITU payroll, and contributed greatly to the increase in the power and the prestige of the ITU officers... the increasing

> centralization of the ITU was followed by withdrawal from the ITU of thirteen pressmen's locals in 1889, and in the next two decades, the bookbinders, typefounders, and photo engravers also seceded from the ITU... (p.18,19, 20)

It should be noted also, that the first 1850 convention of the ITU adopted a radical preamble to its constitution which read, in part:

> . . . it is useless to disguise the fact that there exists a perpetual antagonism between capital and labor--one striving to sell its labor for as much and the other side for as little as they can....

By 1878, the ITU had deteriorated into a reactionary pro-capitalist "business union." Its president, Bodwell, made this abundantly clear: “the working men desire no division of property or overthrow of the social system... printers have no truck with the communist cutthroats.” (quoted--Philip Taft, *The AFL in the Time of Gompers*, p. 4) The history of the ITU actually depicts the tragedy of the American labor movement from its libertarian beginnings to its ultimate degeneration .

Distorting History: The Case of William H. Sylvis and the Moulder's Union

William H. Sylvis (1829-1869) one of the most prominent labor leaders of the Civil War period, despite his sincerity and dedication, does not merit the extravagant praise heaped upon him by Marxist and other authoritarian historians.

The pro-communist labor historian Philip Foner, deifies Sylvis because Sylvis obliterated the United Federation of autonomous locals and reorganized the Iron Moulders' Union into a despotic "centralized national organization." The constitutions and by-laws of the local unions "were to be subjected to the authority of the national organization." Sylvis "fought against outlaw strikes even though *many local leaders opposed him*. . . all strikes must be authorized," and locals who disobeyed would get no support from the nationally controlled treasury. Foner notes with evident satisfaction that ". . . no other union had so concerned itself with setting up such a highly knit ... centralized form of organization." (my emphasis).

According to Foner, centralization was necessary because the loosely organized federations of locals had to be disciplined by a rigid form of organization. But no one could

possibly better refute Foner's arguments that he (unintentionally) does himself, as the following collection of quotes abundantly proves:

> . . . it was to *local assemblies rather than the national trade union* that the workers turned for a solution of their problems . . . a strong federation of city center labor and trade bodies grew out of the strike movements ... each trade organized itself... (my emphasis)
>
> . . . to the TRADE ASSEMBLIES goes the honor of being the organizing centers of the surging union movement during the Civil War. . . [my emphasis] before the end of the war the locals constructed a network extending from New England to California to which many trade and industrial organizations created a feeling of cooperation among workers by aiding any organization on strike...
>
> . . . the Rochester Trades Assembly formed of carpenters, typographers, iron moulders, cutters, and painter's unions, set up an organization committee to help any trade to organize . . . in 1864 the San Francisco Trade Assembly helped the

> striking iron moulders by going all the way down to the Panama Isthmus to stop strikebreakers...

A good illustration of Foner's authoritarian-statist attitude is his reason for criticizing ". . . the most influential labor paper of the Civil War era *Fincher's Trade Review,*" which he greatly admired:

> . . . its great weakness was opposition against political activity on the ground that political action creates a fraternal feeling between two antagonistic classes and restrains the workers from asserting and maintaining the rights so essential to themselves and their families.... (all the above quotations on pp. 346-347, 348, 350-351).

How Foner, despite his own massive evidence to the contrary, could possibly reach diametrically opposite conclusions is primarily due to the inability of Marxists, and Marxist sympathizers to understand organizational forms and the nature of order in society. It is their authoritarian-statist orientation that enmeshes them in massive and insoluble contradictions.

The obsession that centralization--the monopoly of power--is an indispensable form of order is a dangerous illusion.

Centralization is an artificial, imposed form of organization, born of the lust for power. Federation is a natural form of organization which emerged gradually, out of the constant daily practice and experience of living together in society. Federalism is born of the ineluctable interdependence of mankind.

Federalism means coordination and self-management through mutual understanding and free agreement. All the groups and associations belonging to the federation, enjoy the benefits of unity while still exercising self-management in their own spheres. Centralization springs from the compulsion to dominate. Federalism, on the contrary, springs from the will and the necessity for harmony and solidarity. Federalism means the organization of freedom in one of his most striking aphorisms, the great social thinker, Proudhon, declared: "He who says 'freedom' without saying at the same time, 'federation,' says nothing."

Revolutionary Tendencies: The 1880s

Professor Paul Brissenden, (*The IWW: A Study in American Syndicalism*) writes that “the labor history of the 1870s and especially the 1880s teems with evidence of the radical temper in labor organizations.”

The constitutions of scores of unions (and of the AFL itself) reflect, in various degrees, revolutionary tendencies. Thus, the original 1886 constitution of the AFL reads:

> . . . Whereas a struggle is going on in all nations of the civilized world between oppressors and oppressed in all countries, a struggle between capitalist and laborer, which grows in intensity from year to year, and will work disastrous results to toiling millions, if they are not combined for mutual protection and benefit....

The Declaration of Principles of the Metal Workers of America is most explicit:

> ... the entire abolition of the present system of society can alone emancipate the workers to be replaced by a new system based on cooperative organization of production in a free society. Our organization should be a school to educate its members for the new conditions of the new society when the workers will regulate their own affairs... (quoted, Justus Ebert's pamphlet, *The IWW in Theory and Practice*)

And Norman Ware notes that:

> . . . the reluctance of the labor movement to accept collective bargaining as its major function was largely due to the fact that it involved an acceptance of the wage system... (*Labor Movement in the United States: 1860-1895*, p.143)

Willis and Montgomery emphasize that "...failure to recognize the background in socialism of some of the trade union leaders would be to ignore one of the real and vital constituents of unionism in the decades after about 1890." (*Organized Labor*, p. 59)

AFL leaders Adolph Strasser--a cigarmaker, P.J. McGuire, a founder of the carpenters union, and Samuel Gompers, President of the AFL were, among others, all socialists. In his autobiography, *Seventy Years of Life and Work*, Gompers recalls how:

> . . . the cigar makers in the shops on the east side of Manhattan, developed the practice of designating one of their number to read Marx's *Capital* or the various other socialist tracts, while the others worked. The group as a whole, contributing the wages of the reader for the hours lost from work...

The 1880s marked a profusion of spontaneous uprisings of

workers for shorter hours, more pay and better working conditions. In the five years between 1881 and 1886, the number of strikers rose from 130,000 to 500,000 and enveloped major industrial centers throughout the whole country. The direct economic action strike movement took on a syndicalistic coloration, thus rendering many workers receptive to revolutionary ideas. Even the Federation of Organized Trades Unions of the United States, (founded 1881) forerunner of the AFL, came to realize that:

> . . . economic action would be far more effective than a thousand laws whose execution depends upon the good will of aspiring politicians and sycophantic department heads. . . the workers, in their endeavor to reform the prevailing economic condition must rely on their own power exclusively...

Foundation of the "Black International"

In the midst of the burgeoning labor movement of the 1880s, the rudimentary revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist groups and scattered individuals came together, clarified their ideas, and evolved into a national movement. This was the famous "Black International" or International

Working People's Association--IWPA (organized in Pittsburgh, 1881).

While the IWPA had in common with revolutionary syndicalism the replacement of state by ". . . a free society based upon the cooperative organization of production, and the regulation of public affairs by free contracts between autonomous communes and associations . . ."; it differed in a very important respect, from the "Bakuninist" revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist wing of the ("First") International Workingmen's Association (IWMA, founded 1864) to which it has been compared.

Where the IWMA put greatest stress on the economic struggles for shorter working hours and better working conditions under capitalism in preparation for the expropriation of industry and the self-management of the economy by the unions; the IWPA rejected strikes for shorter hours, increased pay and better working conditions as essentially reformist, serving only to prolong capitalism. It over-emphasized (to the detriment of direct economic action) armed insurrection and violence.

Revolutionaries like the Haymarket martyrs, Parsons, Spies, Fielden and Schwab, themselves active unionists, soon realized that movements isolating themselves from

the workers by downgrading their economic struggles for immediate improvements are bound to degenerate into impotent sects.

The revolutionary movement flourished after it abandoned this suicidal policy. Although it numbered only about three thousand in Chicago, the IWPA became, as Henry David put it, ". . . a forceful factor in preparing for the great May 1st General Strike for the eight hour day. . ." (*History of the Haymarket Affair*, p. 150). It was a manifestation of the class struggle and had to be supported.

In stressing the crucial importance of direct economic action for immediate improvements, the revolutionaries accelerated the radicalization, at least to some extent, of the labor movement. The repercussions of the Haymarket tragedy on the development of the radical labor movement is difficult to gauge--particularly, the role of the anarchists. David concludes that the IWPA survived intact "with little decrease in propaganda. . . the decade after 1887 witnessed a more active, intelligent, widespread, discussion of revolutionary doctrines than ever before. . ." (p. 400).

In addition to the employers and the state, the eight-hour-workday movement had to contend with reactionary labor

leaders like P.M. Arthur, Grand Chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, who to his eternal shame, opposed the eight-hour day movement because “two hours less work means two hours loafing about corners and two hours more for drink.”

The Knights of Labor

To the extent that the Knights of Labor (founded Philadelphia) 1869 contemplated a "radical change in industry" and the abolition of the wage system; proclaimed the principle of industrial unionism and welcomed largely unskilled and semi-skilled workers, irrespective of sex, race or nationality, into its ranks under the slogan "An injury to one is the concern to all," it could be considered a forerunner of the IWW.

But these sentiments should not be taken at face value. The Knights of Labor, too, was infected with the chronic counter-revolutionary, class collaborationist afflictions which, from its inception, still plagues the labor movement. Like the class collaborationists, the Knights proposed to achieve their goals, not by the overthrow of capitalism, but within the confines of the system itself.

Strikes and other forms of direct economic action for more wages, shorter hours, better working conditions should, according to the policy of the Knights, "be avoided wherever possible." Conflicts should be amicably settled by employers and employees, and failing that, by arbitration. Social changes should be made by enacting favorable legislation, via the ballot.

Like the conservative unions, the Knights maintained that the iniquities of capitalism--"free enterprise" or state--could be legally corrected by the establishment of worker controlled consumers and producers cooperatives. The workers would, in effect, go into business for themselves, out compete, and hopefully price the capitalists out of business .

At no time did the cooperative movement, from its inception nearly two centuries ago today (with membership close to four hundred million), constitute the slightest threat to the "establishment." On the contrary, municipal, state and national governments, and even the United Nations, have for years encouraged and heavily subsidized all sorts of cooperative enterprises. Under capitalism, there is no substantial difference, in effect, between such fraudulent "cooperatives" and trusts established by

cooperating capitalists bent on increasing profits .

The pernicious obsession that the chronic afflictions of capitalism can be peacefully corrected without struggles, imbues the workers with a capitalist mentality. It erodes their revolutionary vitality, and atrophies the will to fight the system.

With few relatively minor reservations, today the proposals of Knights of Labor would be enthusiastically endorsed by the liberals, the "progressive" clergy, and even the moderate socialists. Terence Powderly, "Grand Master Workman" and President of the Knights, in the following pronouncement, best summarized the attitude of his organization and confirms our observations:

> . . . if the wages lost in strikes were set aside in a special fund and invested in cooperative enterprises, it would be possible to amass a sum sufficient to erect shops and factories and give work to idle brothers . . . but I fail to see lasting good in strikes. . . a strike is a relic of barbarism. . . (Philip Taft, *The AFL in the Time of Gompers*, p.22)

The Knights: Leaders versus Rank-And-File

The Knights of Labor refused to endorse the eight hour workday movement. While local rank-and-file assemblies were 100% solid with the Haymarket anarchists, the official organ of the Knights, *American Labor Budget*, applauded the assassination of the Haymarket martyrs:

> . . . Socialism, anarchism and murder find no defenders in the Knights of Labor. They are the friends of law and order and are determined that the laws shall be obeyed....

Ray Ginger in his biography of Eugene V. Debs tells that Powderly and the Knight leaders not only urged members not to strike, but actually tried to break strikes when they did take place:

> . . . when packinghouse workers completely shut down the Chicago stock yards, the conditions indicated that there was every chance of victory, Powderly ordered the strikers to return to work . . . the strike was soon broken and so was the Knights of Labor in Chicago.... (*The Burning Cross*, p.49)

The massive strikes in the 1880s were spontaneous uprisings called by the local Assemblies of the Knights of

Labor, against the orders of the leadership, or were grudgingly tolerated when the leadership could do nothing to stop them. (To borrow a sentence from Jeremy Brecher's *Strike!*) "... members went on strike first and joined the union later..." In preference to the ballot box, the rank-and-file stressed direct economic action--boycotts, slowdowns, passive resistance, and in self-defense, confrontations with armed thugs and armed government strikebreakers.

In no other organization was there greater contrast between the reactionary policies of the leadership and the radical temper of the members. Those habitually singing hosannas to the Knights of Labor--and there are far too many--should remember that it was the "ordinary" workers and not their misleaders, who should be credited with carrying on the militant tradition of the American labor movement.

Birth Throes of the IWW

A tendency, as the word implies, is an imprecise, vague inclination to move in a certain general direction. It is not an organization with a clearcut ideology and definite program of action. With the launching of the IWW, the

revolutionary syndicalist tendency, intermeshed with and obscured by other conflicting tendencies and groupings, lost its ambiguous character and became a distinct, organized movement. It is only natural that the IWW in the process of working out its clearly defined principles and tactics, different and often conflicting concepts should emerge.

Soon after the first founding convention of the IWW in June 1905, irreconcilable differences between opposing factions almost wrecked the organization. The main controversy revolved around parliamentary political action versus direct economic action for the attainment of the cooperative commonwealth. Shall the IWW remain an exclusively fighting economic movement or shall it also endorse and become, in effect, an electioneering agency for a "workers" political party?

This was also the main issue involved in the conflict between the two opposing concepts--state socialism versus anarcho-syndicalism--which wrecked the "first" International, as it threatened to wreck the IWW. The controversy was important because it, to a great degree, shaped the character of the modern labor movement. The nature of the controversy was clearly spelled out in

Resolution #9, article 7A, of the Marxist dominated 1872, Hague Congress of the International:

> . . in the struggle against the collective power of the propertied classes, the working class cannot act as a class except by *constituting itself into a political party*, distinct from, and opposed to all other political parties....
>
> . . . the constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to insure the triumph of the social revolution, and its ultimate aim, the abolition of classes . . . *The conquest of political power has therefore become the great duty of the working class*.... (my emphasis).

The revolutionary members of the IWW insisted that the IWW must remain an exclusively fighting economic movement. On the basis of their own experience and the lessons of past history, they maintained that it was impossible to unite, on the basis of their different--often conflicting--racial, religious, political, social and cultural affiliations. The struggle for economic well being is the one common interest that unites all the workers.

In Germany, England, France and elsewhere, "socialist"

politicians and adventurers infiltrated and eventually dominated the labor movement. "... Constituting the working class into a political party..." (Marx) drains the revolutionary vitality of the workers, deprives them of economic action (their most effective weapon), rendering them defenseless against the combined onslaughts of their mortal enemies, the employers and the state.

A strong case can be made for the proposition that "enlightened" political action by labor unions for the election of a "socialist" government, or a government that will be "friendly to labor," constitutes a greater danger to unionism than out-and-out racketeering. Open corruption can be seen and fought, but the illusion that the state --*any state*-- can be friendly to labor is hard to dispel. This pernicious obsession leads only to the paralysis of the labor movement and paves the way for totalitarianism.

Eugene Debs and the IWW

Although Debs, a founder of the IWW, left the organization because it rejected Marx's political party platform, he must be credited with anticipating the IWW's critique of the AFL. He saw the need for revolutionary industrial unionism, "The One Big Union" of the working class. Debs' experience in

the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, awoke in him the necessity to organizing the unorganized and organized workers into an all embracing federation of railway workers.

The American Railway Union (ARU) came into being because the reactionary job-trust Railway Brotherhoods did not care to organize the unskilled and neglected crafts--carmen, section hands, switchmen, etc.--who, according to Debs' biographer Ray Ginger: “rushed pell mell into the ARU so fast that the union officers were unable to pass out charters fast enough to keep pace with the flood of applications.” (*The Bending Cross*)

After emerging victorious from the great strikes against the giant Union Pacific and Great Northern Railroads, the ARU launched a nationwide boycott in support of the striking employees of the Pullman Palase Car Co. The boycott actually became a strike when the ARU refused to move trains carrying Pullman cars. The strike, which gave every evidence of success, was brutally crushed by federal troops sent by President Grover Cleveland.

Debs was not at that time a socialist. He started out in 1877 as a defender of capitalism against "the lawless, violent strikers, and insurrectionists" (great 1877 railway

strikes). Debs campaigned to elect Cleveland President. It was the realization that the struggle had developed ". . . into a contest between the producers and the money power, with the courts against the strikers" that impelled Debs to join the Socialist Party.

As the Socialist Party's leading propagandist and perennial candidate for the presidency, Debs enthusiastically proclaimed Marx's political party formula. He never realized, as Emma Goldman put it, in a conversation with him, that "Political action is the death knell of economic action." (Ginger, p. 198)

Ray Ginger points out that Debs left the IWW because he strongly disagreed with its anarcho-syndicalist orientation. Its ". . . radical leaders . . ." condemned all government. They thought that socialist politicians were just as phony as capitalist politicians, ". . . elections were a lot of bunk," and believed that only the unions should "run the country..."

When the 1908 convention of the IWW eliminated the political action phrase from its Preamble to the Constitution “it was inevitable that Debs, who insisted on both industrial unions and the socialist party as a cornerstone of his social policy should resign from the IWW.”

Debs did not publicly attack the IWW but ceased paying dues. However, recent research by historian Bernard J. Brummel shows that Debs revealed his true attitude in a letter written in 1913 to the socialist leader William English Walling:

> The IWW for which Haywood stands and speaks, is an anarchist organization in all except name, and this is the cause of all the trouble . . . when they [the IWW] cannot dominate you and use you for their own purposes they will denounce you as a traitor . . . the very name IWW was often offensive to the great mass of the workers... (*Eugene v. Debs*, p 144)

It is obvious that Debs cannot, in the true sense of the term, be considered a founder of the IWW.

The IWW and the Western Federation of Miners (WFM)

In view of the fact that out of 51,000 members of the IWW when it was founded in 1905, 44,000 belonged to the WFM, the relations between these organizations need clarification. Labor historian Melvin Dubofsky, perhaps

unintentionally, gives the impression that the IWW, in all but name, was an exact replica of the WFM:

> . . . what later became the distinguishing traits of the IWW. . . the combination of industrial labor solidarity, political nonpartnership, direct action, and syndicalism of the IWW. . . had already been subscribed to by the western federation of Miners (WFM) and its offspring the American Labor union in 1903.... (*We Shall be All*, p 73)

These assertions are accurate only if they apply to the influential syndicalist faction. But the WFM, as a whole was never a syndicalist organization. After a brief flirtation--a year or two--the WFM seceded from the IWW, primarily-because the IWW excluded political action and affiliation with political parties from its Preamble and tactical programs. Militants like Saint John, Frank Little and Bill Haywood remained in the IWW.

Although Haywood was an active member of the Socialist Party, toured the country on its behalf, and was its delegate to the International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen, he was (as we have seen) reprimanded by Debs and other socialist leaders because he associated himself with the revolutionary syndicalistic members of the

IWW. This was the real reason why Haywood was dismissed from the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party.

The victorious right wing of the WFM championed electoral action and the program of the Socialist Party. Together with the socialists, the moderate and conservative leaders, who also believed in electoral politics, dominated the WFM. At its 1895 convention the WFM endorsed the Populist Party. At the 1907 convention, WFM President Ed Boyce "… demanded from his followers more intelligent and effective political action." In 1900, the WFM urged labor to vote for the Debs-Harriman Socialist Party Presidential and Vice-presidential ticket. In 1903, the new president of the WFM, Charles Moyer, ". . . promised to make the WFM a union of conscious political workers." And the American Labor Union "offspring of the WFM, offered its members, unswerving loyalty to socialist principles and the Socialist Party." (Dubofsky, pp. 59, 69, 71)

With Haywood's imprisonment on the false charge that he, along with Moyer and Pettibone, engineered the murder of Idaho ex-Governor Steunenberg, and left-wing IWW militants preoccupied with defense and organizing efforts, the anti-syndicalist wing of the WFM seized control of the

organization entirely. They plotted to make the second convention of the WFM the "Waterloo of the revolutionists." In 1908, Haywood was fired.

Before World War One, the right-wing, opportunist President of the Western Federation of Miners, Charles Moyer (who ironically had been a co-defendant in the famous Haywood, Moyer, Pettibone case), dissolved the organization and propelled its remnants into the AFL. It was renamed the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW). In the 1930's, the IUMMSW joined the CIO and fell under the de facto control of the Communist Party. [It was later absorbed by the Steelworkers.]

Triumph of Revolutionary Unionism

Socialist politicians, officials, editors and journalists, and most of the leaders of the Socialist Party joined in brown-nosing the AFL and attacking the IWW.

> Irrespective of their quarrels and differences, the Western Federation of Miners, the AFL, the Socialist Party and their rivals--the Socialist Labor Party--assailed the IWW as an aggregate of 'anarchists'

and 'bums.' (Dubofsky, p.141)

The insufferable Marxist bigot, Daniel De Leon, the Stalin of the Socialist Labor Party, tried to capture the IWW by methods just as reprehensible as any employed by the Communist Party. De Leon even sought to have the IWW journal denied second-class mailing privileges on the basis of the alleged espousal of anarchism. (Dubofsky, p.141)

De Leon made one last attempt to capture the IWW by packing its 1908 convention with his stooges. His putsch failed. The picturesque singing "Overall Brigade" from Portland, Oregon; IWW militants from other parts of the west; wobblies from all over the country hoboed to the Chicago convention. They saved the IWW from the reformers and politicians who connived to cripple the IWW. Fred Thompson, veteran militant, historian and editor points out the significance of the victory:

> . . . In one sense this [victory] is the true launching of the IWW. It is from here on that it exists as an organization with its own distinctive character. The Brewery workers were not in it or likely to be; the Sherman tendency was out; the Western Federation was gone, and now the De Leon forces that had alienated so many unionists. The five thousand

members it had after this 1908 convention were no longer divergent groups trying to live together but a compact organization of men attached to the IWW rather than to something else, largely rebels who had been organized by the new union, but who had long experience in the struggle with the employer, and many of whom were very familiar with all the fine points that radicals argue about. This was the IWW that was to add something new to the American labor movement. (*The IWW: Its First Seventy Years*, p.40)

Notes for a Discussion on the Regeneration of the American Labor Movement

There is no genuine labor movement in America. The class-collaborationist unions, part and parcel of capitalism and the state, cannot (like capitalism itself) be reformed by "boring from within." The phony "leftist" Marxian parties were never really revolutionary. For opportunist reasons of their own, they actually function as the "labor front" for the "welfare state" or state "socialist" varieties of capitalism .

Since the decline of the IWW to a mere handful of dedicated militants, deplores Stanley Aronowitz, "... there is no significant force within the working class offering a radical alternative to business unionism ..." (*Worker's Control*, p. 100). What are the possibilities for the regeneration of the labor movement? What are the possibilities for the re-emergence of a revolutionary minority capable of promoting, to an appreciable extent, the radicalization of such a movement? Our remarks are meant to stimulate fruitful discussion of these vital problems, not prescribe cure-all formulas.

Rebellion in the Ranks

The incorporation of the American labor movement into the "labor front" of the emerging American "welfare" capitalist state, plus the alarming extent to which bureaucracy and corruption--all the evils of capitalist society--infects the unions, has had a devastating effect upon the morale of the anti-totalitarian left. It has undermined the faith in the revolutionary capacity of the labor movement. Sincere militants, including many anarchists, reluctantly rejecting the labor movement as a force for social regeneration, are now searching for other alternatives.

In rightfully stressing the indisputable degeneration of the labor movement, the pessimists underestimate or ignore an equally, or more important development, namely, the spontaneous mass revolts of the rank-and-file "ordinary" members against the triple exploitation of the labor bureaucracy, the employers, and the regimentation of the state. The myth of the happy, uncomplaining, American worker, is not sustained by the facts.

The revival of militancy traces back to the revolutionary tradition of the labor movement and particularly to the revolts of the 1930s: a period marked by spontaneous "sit in" strikes of the unorganized against the employers and

the organized workers against both the class-collaborationist unions and the capitalists. "... the country is full of spontaneous... wild-cat strikes..." [wrote an activist in December 1937] ... "wherever one goes, there are picket lines..." The number of strikers in 1930 was 158,000; in 1933, 312,000; in 1934, 1,353,600. Serious assessments about the character of the American working class must take these facts into consideration.

> During the second world war, 6.7 million strikers participated in 14,471 strikes, far more than there were in the CIO's heyday from 1936 to 1939, and far more than in a comparable period in U.S. labor history... Many of these strikes were unauthorized wildcats which implicitly challenged the leaders of the CIO and their pact with capital and the state.... (Radical America, July-August, 1975)

The AFL and the CIO, including the Communist Party led unions, after the Nazi invasion of Russia, patriotically opposed all strikes--often labor struggles altogether. Millions of AFL and CIO industrial workers refused to suspend the class-struggle during the second world war. The workers ignored high level agreements and conducted illegal strikes.

There were 1,843 strikes in 1950--more than in 1949, and more than the big year of the 1937 "sit-ins." More importantly, they were large national strikes involving not only wage increases, but also shorter hours, better working conditions, health and welfare benefits and quick correction of grievances. There were also unauthorized strikes against speed-ups which prefigured the struggles of recent years.

In 1950, the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) signed a five year contract with General Motors outlawing strikes, ignoring the demand of the workers to stop speed-ups and insure quick settlement of complaints. To force the corporation to grant these demands the workers were forced to take action outside the union. Seventy percent of the workers repudiated the agreement and staged wild cat strikes.

The wildcat strike movements of 1953-1954 which spread to all the corporations and all sections of the nation, finally forced the union to restore the right to strike and shorten the duration of the contract.

The workers revolted against the betrayals of their officials by throwing them out of national and local offices in the Steelworkers Union, Rubber Workers Union, Oil and Chemical Workers Union Textile Workers and Electrical

Workers Unions, etc., and elected new leaders. Although the new leaders turned to be as bad as the old ones, it did manifest the extent of rank-and-file resentment. The leaders of the unions are afraid to oppose the rank-and-file directly. Having tried to thwart membership initiative, and failed, they have publicly supported strikes, while secretly sabotaging them by siding with the employers to impose “labor peace” on the rebellious members.

Coal Miners Revolt

One of the great achievements of the sweeping rank-and-file revolts in the trade unions is the victorious revolts of the coal miners which led to the ousting of the corrupt, entrenched, class-collaborationist, criminal regime of the United Mine Workers (UMW) despot, Tony Boyle. Boyle was convicted of plotting the murder of his rival, Jack Yablonski and members of his family. Boyle pledged that the UMW would not abridge the right of mine owners to run the mines. He did very little about safety in the mines, the fatal "black lung" disease, and the right of the miners to correct these, and other grievances by local strikes.

The miners resorted to wild cat strikes which the union could no longer control. Fortune magazine, in a long article

declared that the miners "... were no longer under union discipline..." The wild cat strike involved 42,000 of West Virginia's 44,000 coal miners and thousands of miners in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky and other high production areas. (For this and copious information on other wild cat strikes, see Jeremy Brecher's excellent *Strike!*)

The miners served notice on the new Miller administration that they would not tolerate the dictatorial procedures instituted by John L. Lewis and his hand picked successor, Boyle. They staged massive wild cat strikes involving over 100,000 miners for the right to settle local issues by local strike without permission of their national, district, or local bureaucrats. Efforts to end the strikes led to the "resignation" (allegedly for health reasons - actually, the ouster) of Miller.

Public Service Workers Strikes

There have been massive strikes even among public service workers who were traditionally the least militant and anti-union. Postal workers staged a nation-wide strike in 1970 not only in violation of federal anti-strike laws (an offense punishable by one and a half years in jail and a

$1,000 fine for each striker), but also in defiance of their leaders.

Striking teachers in New York, Newark, and other cities, were not afraid to go to jail for violation of anti-strike injunctions. For example: The Detroit Federation of Teachers was ordered to pay one million dollars for their six week strike. The New York Teachers local was fined $245,000, and the Philadelphia Teachers Local $290,000 (N.Y. F Times).

The "New Breed of Workers"

The young workers (40% of UAW members are under thirty) are revolting against the authoritarian, centralized, bureaucratic structure of modern industry. The young workers feel that they have less and less to say about their own lives and interests in the workplace as the union officialdom, in league with the employers, determines the con-ditions under which they must labor. The workers demand individual freedom on the point of production, in the factories and workshops in which they spend the best part of their lives.

Douglas Fraser, a vice-president of the UAW (now its

president) complains that:

> these young workers have different values than people of our generation. And Walter Reuther, deceased president of the UAW talked about . . . the new breed of worker in the plant who is less willing to accept the discipline of the workplace. he is unwilling to accept corporate decisions...

In the spring of 1970, at the Chrysler Detroit plant, young workers rebelled, refusing to work overtime after fifteen straight days on the job. Absenteeism in the plants on weekdays rose from two percent in 1950 to five percent in 1970. On Fridays and Saturdays the absentee rate soared to fifteen percent of the work force. An article written by a reporter who interviewed young workers finds that:

> . . . the younger generation which has already shaken the campus, is showing signs of restlessness in the plants of industrial America. . . They are better educated and want treatment as equals from the bosses on the plant floor. They are not afraid of losing their jobs and often challenge the foremen's orders. . . many young workers are calling for immediate changes in working conditions, they bypass their leaders and start wild cat strikes. . .

> a steel worker recalled that young workers started several wild cat strikes over the way an employee was treated by a foreman. . . they wanted to be *asked* what to do. Not *told* to do it. Last month, young workers led a three day strike in a brick making plant after a foreman disciplined a worker for carelessness in operating a life truck. (quoted--Brecher, p. 265)

In 1971, a wild cat strike almost halted the operations of the General Motors Lordstown, Ohio plant, causing it to lose production of thousands of small Vega cars and Chevrolet trucks. Most of the workers were under twenty five years of age, wages were good. A variety of new types of power tools and other automatic devices, eliminated much of the heavy physical labor. Clearly, the rebellion stemmed from something deeper than the question of wages. It raised the question which promises to be the major issue in the labor movement, namely, workers' demand for a voice in how, and under what conditions a job is to be done--the issue of workers' control.

In the 1973 negotiations for a new contract, the union leadership was under considerable pressure from the UAW members and local leaders to limit the freedom of the

employer to make decisions about the speed of production, layoffs, automation, etc. But the Vice-President of General Motors, adamantly insisted on management's uncontested right to make decisions in areas . . . vital to the success of the business..." i.e., *profits*.

Revolutionary Possibilities

Revolutionary unions cannot possibly provide the conservative worker interested only in "What's in it for me?" with the benefits that a "legitimate" union is able to provide: strike benefits; annuities; health and life insurance; an adequate staff to administer the welfare programs; a capable legal staff to draw up contracts and defend the union in the courts; plenty of money to pay for all these and many other services; a "responsible" union, recognized and enjoying the respect of the employers with whom employers are willing to sign contracts; etc.

We must face up to the unpleasant fact that the conservative wage slave, afraid to defend his or her rights against the boss and his stooges, is not going to join a tiny, poverty stricken "subversive" union whom he or she probably never heard of. We have neither the resources, the personnel, nor the desire to imitate the class-

collaborationist unions. We cannot do so without betraying our principles and losing our identity. Aside from practical considerations, making it impossible to compete with powerfully entrenched unions; attempts to induce conservative workers to leave their unions and join ours, by hypocritically diluting principles, is a suicidal policy which, to a great extent, led to the collapse of the European labor movement.

Those most likely to join radical unions are the unconscious rebels who are raising hell on the job. They are not afraid to lose their jobs. They challenge the authority of their foremen and supervisors. They refuse to work overtime. To enforce their demands they start wild cat strikes in violation of union rules, contracts, and government regulations. In the course of their struggles the rebellious workers improvised syndicalist tactics and grass-roots forms of organization similar to those worked out by the revolutionary labor movement during its development. The demands of the wildcatters practically duplicate those made by the workers since the inception of industrial capitalism. They include :

- the right of the workers on the job to call and settle strikes and grievances.

- all demands and ways of putting them into effect must also be decided by the rank-and-file.
- slowdowns, 'sit ins" harassing employers, supervisors and foremen and other forms of passive resistance.
- the battle for workers' control must be fought on the shop floor.
- refusal to honor agreements made for them, when such agreements clash with the interests of the workers on the job.

Today's rebels are acting in accordance with the militant syndicalist traditions of the American labor movement. Because the syndicalist opposition is itself a wild cat movement in revolt against the system, it related best to their own experience. Today's wildcatters could be most receptive to revolutionary ideas. If the libertarian left, now almost extinct, is to become a real force challenging business unionism, it will have to go all out to reach them.

This is not to imply that we should, even if we can, foist our own ideas upon the workers. As Stanley Aronowitz puts it, "the spontaneous revolt will have to develop its own collective forms of struggle and demands." But he believes that "the labor movements of the future... will take a revolutionary syndicalist direction." (see *Workers ' Control*,

p . 105)

Another capable observer, Stanley Weir, notes that the rebellious workers' groups "... scattered in thousands of industrial establishments across the country who have developed informal underground unions..." constitute a sort of guerrilla movement. He suggests that the coordination of such work-groups and plant committees united in city, regional and national councils "... might be an alternative to bureaucracies elected every few years, far removed from the tribulations and the life of the workers in the factories..." (*Workers' Control*, pp 46-47, 105)

Deficiencies of the Wildcat Movement

Without discounting such possibilities, it seems that these speculations about the future of the wildcat movement are too optimistic. They do not sufficiently consider a number of formidable obstacles. Spontaneity--synonym for the spirit of revolt--is, of course, an indispensable prerequisite for social change. But spontaneity alone, is not enough. Emotions are fickle. Popular enthusiasm comes and goes, flares up suddenly and subsides as quickly as it rises, leaving little behind.

A most disturbing, even tragic, confirmation of this truth, is the way the miners (the most militant wildcatters in American labor history) after, in effect, ousting their "reform" leader Arnold Miller, allowed his successor, Sam Church, to re-institute a dictatorship almost as absolute as that exercised by Boyle. Church was allowed to appoint his own vice-president, double union dues, increase the organizing staff from thirty to one hundred and twenty appointees, loyal to Church. For this, Church was lauded by such organs of big business as the Wall Street Journal and the mine owners. Church's successor, the “reformer” Richard Trumka (a lawyer who worked only several months in the mines) has proved little better.

There must be knowledge and organization. Spontaneity is not sufficient. Spontaneity is effective only when translated into a solid organization, which animated by the spirit of revolt, is guided by clear and consistent ideas. Bakunin and the revolutionary syndicalists in the First International, stressed the point that if spontaneity alone were sufficient to liberate peoples they would have freed themselves long ago since...

> Spontaneity did not prevent them from accepting...
> all the religious, political and economic absurdities

> of which they are the eternal victims. They are ineffectual because they lack two things--organization and knowledge...
>
> Not even poverty and degradation are sufficient to generate the Social Revolution. They may call forth sporadic local rebellions, but not great, widespread mass uprisings... It is indispensable that the people be inspired by a universal ideal... that they have a general idea of their rights, and a deep passionate belief in the validity of these rights... (*Bakunin On Anarchy*, p 14)

The militants are not social revolutionists, determined to overthrow capitalism and build the new society. Their attitude to capitalism and social problems in general, differs in no essential respect from the ultra-conservative or liberal bourgeois views of their leaders--men like George Meany or Walter Reuther (both deceased). They seek only gradual reforms within the unions and within the system. Thus, the rank-and-file miners of Kanaway County, West Virginia, virulently patriotic, demanded elimination of "subversive" literature and teaching of "subversive" doctrines in the elementary and high schools.

It is axiomatic that neither the rebellious mood of militants,

nor the structure of an organization, however well conceived, make it *revolutionary.* A labor movement is *revolutionary* only to the extent that the workers feel the need to organize themselves into revolutionary unions dedicated to the abolition of capitalism and the state, to take possession of the means of production and establish a society self managed by the workers. Lacking these revolutionary perspectives, rebellious movements gradually lose their dynamism and integrate themselves into the system. The chief function of a revolutionary minority is to "fan the flames of discontent." (IWW slogan).

Revolutionary ideas cannot be artificially planted. Workers become receptive when these concepts are confirmed and reflected through their own experience.

"Welfare" Unionism Invigorates "Business Unionism"

Sid Lens' contention that "... the labor movement won important new concessions from management ... [in the form] health and welfare funds and auxiliary benefits to supplement social security..." is a dangerous illusion (Crisis of American Labor, p. 128). These are no "concessions." Welfare-pension benefits are paid by the workers in the form of "fringe" benefits deducted from wages. Federal

social security benefits are likewise deducted from earnings of the workers in the form of income taxes.

Municipal, state and federal income taxes deducted from profits of individual business enterprises and corporations are eventually paid for by consumers--mostly workers--in the form of higher prices for goods and services. The same holds true for employer financed pension and welfare benefits.

The administration of pension-welfare funds, whether controlled exclusively by employers--in most cases jointly with the unions--or by local, state or federal governments, reached the staggering total of five hundred billion dollars! Investment of such colossal sums in stocks and bonds for business enterprises turns union trustees and administrators into full-fledged members of the business community. As such they are more concerned with placing good investments than with the welfare of the workers. Thirty billion dollars are invested by unions in *non-union* corporations!

Rifkin and Barber's expose of the pension racket gives startling examples of the extent and close connection between union investors and corporations:

... Lawrence Smedley of the AFL-CIO Social Security

> Department says, the traditional adversary relationship between capital and labor needs to be re-examined, since labor now owns capital (*The North will Rise Again: Pensions, Politics and Power in the 1980s*, p 149)
>
> ... virtually acting as owners, unions are calling for representation on the Board of Directors... in 1977, President Roger D. Wenthold of Local 81 International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers proposed that unions become members of the board of Directors in Corporations in which union funds are invested similar proposals are being made by auto workers and other unions. [Douglas Fraser, President of the UAW is now on the Chrysler Corporations board of Directors] (ibid. p 163)

But this is not all. We are informed that "… almost all pension-welfare funds are handed over for investment... " to banks, insurance companies and brokers, who are paid a percentage of the funds for their advice and services. The 100 largest banks, ten big banks, insurance companies, etc., control the investment of three hundred *billion* dollars in pension-welfare funds! The money is invested in

corporations in which the financiers own stock or are controlled by them. A very lucrative business indeed!

> . . . Joe Swire who teaches pension courses at the AFL-CIO Labor Study Center complains that bank investment people and insurance people, gambling with the workers money are losing billions of dollars with our funds (Rifkin and Barber—p. 102-103)

Public workers pension funds are actually controlled by politicians and eighty per cent of public pension fund are invested in corporations controlled by the politicians, or have an interest in them. The extent of this racket becomes even more scandalous when we learn that there are one hundred and twenty five *billion* dollars in local and state pension funds alone. (see Rifkin and Barber, p. 129) Rifkin and Barber document the charge that almost one out of every two workers qualified to receive pensions never collect a cent because: "... like insurance companies, pension plans work under the principle that, while everyone takes part, few will collect." (p 126)

A few examples cited:

- After nine years and eleven months on the job, a Detroit welder is laid off *deliberately* only one month

before he qualified for a pension.

- A textile worker in Georgia, injured after years of faithful labor gets nothing.
- John Daniel, a member of Chicago Teamster's Local 705, who worked more than the twenty years needed to qualify for his pension, was denied a pension because he was laid off for three and a half months thirteen years before (p. 125, 126, 132).
- ... many Alaskans, because of extreme unemployment in the post pipeline era, find it impossible to work the necessary hours needed to qualify for pensions. All the moneys contributed in their behalf will be forfeited to the fund... (*Pioneer Alaska Weekly*--Feb 15, 1980)

Welfare-Pension System Undermines Workers Militancy

Control of the welfare-pension system by labor and management for the joint expatiation of the workers, constitutes one of the mainstays of business unionism. It ties the worker to his job; makes it easier to impose discipline; curbs revolts and develops a servile attitude

toward the union bureaucracy. Furthermore, investment of billions of dollars by the union in stocks and bonds of corporations, fosters the conviction that both the unions and the workers have a stake in the preservation of the capitalist system.

There is furthermore, an affinity between the common bourgeois life-style of the union administrators--almost all of them are nonworkers--and their employer counterparts. Management of such huge sums and the privileges derived therefrom, naturally spawns a new, parasitic class of bureaucrats, far removed from the workers: social workers, lawyers, economists, financial experts, ambitious executives and graduates of business schools seeking careers in the lucrative, expanding welfare-pension field.

The employers have been able to exert a measure of control over unions by threatening to withhold contributions to welfare-pension funds, without which the system would collapse. By threatening to stop collecting dues for the unions (the infamous "check-off") the employers pressured the unions to scale down their demands and discipline balking members.

Though written in the 1940s, labor historian Philip Taft's remarks on this subject, remain relevant:

> . . . labor beneficiary activities were an effective means of developing discipline . . . A threat to take action against those indulging in un-authorized strikes has been supported by the ability to inflict considerable penalties... Control of union benefits to members has given the union officials added power over locals,... power that might be abused by unscrupulous officeholders (*Economics and Problems of Labor*--p 261)

It is for such solid reasons that the revolutionary syndicalists, including the Spanish National Confederation of Labor (CNT) and the IWW, have adamantly opposed the accumulation of vast sums in union treasuries.

Workers Themselves Should Independently Control Their Own Pension-Welfare Plans

The problem of regenerating the labor movement is inseparable from achieving independent control by the workers of their own welfare programs. Mutual aid and welfare arrangements are necessary, but such matters should be handled separate and apart from the union as such. We should demand that wages, siphoned off into

"fringe benefits and welfare" funds, be paid to the workers in *cash*. As a feasible alternative, we should urge workers to finance the establishment of independent cooperative societies of all types, which will respond adequately to their needs.

Long before the labor movement was corrupted and the state stepped in, the workers organized a network of cooperative institutions of all kinds schools, summer camps for children and adults, homes for the aged, health and cultural centers, credit associations, fire, life, and health insurance, technical education, housing, etc. We should encourage the revival and expansion of such cooperatives as a realistic alternative to the "welfare" racket.

A typical example is the Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Fund, described as the "Oldest Progressive Fraternal Society in the United States" with 60,000 members in 370 branches in 28 states (as of 1941), "free of profit making motives, operated solely for its members, this society offers a variety of features designed to give maximum protection at a minimum cost." The Society provides sick benefits, medical benefits, children's insurance, life insurance, hospital aid, youth health insurance, death benefits, recreation farms, and a relief fund. There are

literally tens of thousands of such organizations blanketing the country, providing every imaginable need. Though financially limited, this movement could be enlarged and adequately financed to provide all, if not more, services now administered by the state and the bureaucratic unions. This could constitute a realistic alternative to the horrendous abuses of the establishment at a fraction of the cost.

In this connection Bakunin's ideas remain cogent. Although he was a strong advocate of revolutionary syndicalist principles, Bakunin did not deem it practical or desirable that society be controlled solely by unions or by any other single agency: the abuse of power is a perpetual temptation, almost impossible to resist. Bakunin maintained that a free society must be a pluralistic society in which the ever expanding needs of humanity will be reflected in an adequate variety of associations .

The decentralization of power and workers' control of their unions is impossible unless this problem is dealt with. Our critique applies with equal force to employees of the biggest employer--the state. It applies with even greater force to the social security system under which the bulk of the moneys extracted from the blood of the workers in the

form of taxes, are criminally expended for weapons for war, threatening the extermination of humanity.

Long Term Contrasts and Industry-Wide Bargaining

Many keen students of the labor movement, like Stanley Aronowitz, have come to realize that:

> ... long term contracts, which have become standard practice in American industry, have robbed the rank-and-file of considerable power to deal with its problems within the framework of collective bargaining. Workers have been forced to act outside of approved procedures because they know instinctively that the union has become an inadequate tool to conduct struggles even when they have not yet perceived the union as an outright opponent to their interests... (*Workers' Control*, pp 63, 64)

Direct agreements, negotiations and settlements between workers and employers in each plant without the intercession of any intermediate body--union hierarchy, arbitration boards, government agencies, etc.--automatically excludes industry-wide bargaining.

Agreements must never restrict solidarity with other workers in strikes, boycotts and other forms of direct action. Direct action must be supported in spite of the fact that such manifestations are prohibited in industry-wide agreements.

Shorter Hours: A Priority Demand

Without in the least downgrading struggles for more pay (which is eventually passed on to the workers in the form of higher prices), the struggle for shorter working hours is even more important.

There has been ludicrously little progress in this direction since the great eight-hour-day movement in the 1880's. If the eight hour workday was feasible in the 1880's, a century ago, the four-hour day, four day-week is surely long overdue.

This demand, which is really a substantial, permanent gain, has not been seriously considered by the unions. Even the eight hour workday has not yet been attained in industries like auto, steel, transportation, etc., where millions working overtime actually labor ten and even twelve hours daily. Overtime work, except in real emergencies, must be

prohibited. The four-hour-workday, four-day workweek, will alleviate the plight of the unemployed better than the nostrums concocted by legislators and union politicians.

In this connection, employed bakers (perhaps other trades?) shared work with their unemployed fellow workers, by taking a day or more off from their jobs and allowing the unemployed to replace them for that period. Thus, the unemployed worker could earn approximately the same wage by working in different shops. Another custom was rotation of employment. These temporary expedients would, of course, not even begin to solve the grave problem of mass unemployment. But it is precisely this noble spirit of mutual aid and solidarity, which is now so sorely needed to inspire the regeneration of the American labor movement.

Workers' Control

The 1960s witnessed the growth of a tremendous movement for workers' control of industry. The News Bulletin of the reformist International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations (July 1964) predicted that "… the demand for workers' control ... may well become the common ground for advanced sectors of the labor

movement." There is an enormous literature on this subject.

In Western Europe, the movement arose with the failure of nationalization of industry to change the relationship between the worker and boss, of ruler and ruled. In Belgium, the General Federation of Workers called a special congress to consider workers' control. In France, the second largest union federation demanded democratic socialism and workers' self-management of industry. Similar demands were voiced in Italy, West Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries.

In England, the Institute for Workers' Control--in response to pressure from the ranks--was established in 1968, by a congress of rank and-file delegates from such powerful unions as the Transport and General Workers, and National Union of Public Employees.

Of this once promising movement, barely a trace remains. Their is no workers' self-management movement. The "Marxist-Leninists"; the Stalinists; the Trotskyites, who deify the architects of the Russian totalitarian state (the exterminators of the labor movement); the socialist politicians; the welfareists; all echo the slogan for workers' control.

Not one of them dares raise an irreverent finger against the Holy Ark of the State. Not one of them shows the slightest sign of grasping the obvious fact that elimination of the division of society between order givers and order takers, *not only in the state, but at every level, is the indispensable condition for the realization of workers' self-management: the heart and soul of socialism*.

American Business Unionists Sabotage Workers' Control

The reactionary American unionists, like their allies, the employers and the state, are not interested in workers' control of industry--much less, workers' control of their unions. Any move in this direction by the leadership, was made only when they were forced to do so by pressure from below.

To insure labor peace, employers may, under pressure, make concessions in regard to increased wages and "fringe benefits" such as paid holidays, vacations, retirement, supplemental unemployment insurance and similar matters. But the settlement of issues which encroach upon the right of the employers to determine the conduct of production (curtailing the power of foremen and

supervisors, punishing violations of plant discipline, elimination of unprofitable plants or transfer of facilities to low-wage areas, etc.) is adamantly rejected. On such matters there is no compromise. The key provision of every contract is the unrestricted prerogative of management to operate their enterprises as they alone see fit.

Like shorter working hours, widening the area of workers' control, is a priority demand. We repeat: *the battle for workers' control will have to be fought on the shop floor*.

Independence and Decentralization

The greatest possible decentralization and autonomy of the unions is the indispensable pre-condition for the independence of the workers' organizations.

Integrated National and International Federations - *not centralized bureaucracies* - in production, distribution, air and surface transportation, communication, exchange, natural resources, science and technology and other innumerable economic functions are of course indispensable.

But millions, perhaps most, organized workers mostly

service trades, serving only local areas - cities and suburbs, towns, villages, etc. - do not need to be organized nationally.

Retail, wholesale and department store workers, municipal, hospital, and other public service workers, teachers, laundry workers, building service and maintenance workers, construction and repair trades, and innumerable other workers serve only local areas. They don't have to be ruled by national bureaucracies-- miniature states--do not have to support hordes of parasites, drawing inflated salaries and "expense" accounts totalling millions of dollars.

Workers can achieve solidarity and coordinate operations through their own area federations on a local level, and on a national level, through direct contact and consultation via telephone and other modern high-speed communication and information technology, employing the same facilities used by national and international corporations.

Preventing Bureaucracy

It is for the sake of unions directly controlled by their membership that libertarian radicals fought to defend their

independence against leaders and cliques bent on becoming dictators of the unions. It is for such reasons that they sought to halt the growth of bureaucracy and despotism, by insisting that wages of officials shall not exceed the average amount paid to the workers they represent; that no paid officials shall remain in office longer than two years, before returning to work; that officials and delegates, paid and unpaid, must at all times be subject to recall if they violate instructions of the membership. Bitter experience should convince the workers *never to surrender their power* to any of their leaders, no matter who these leaders may be; no matter how honest and selfless they may be--or pretend to be.

Libertarians working in union shops should resist all attempts of union bureaucrats to quell rank-and-file militancy. They should refuse to accept paid posts or become unpaid appointees of the union bureaucrats and obey their orders. They should serve the members of the union without pay by voluntarily undertaking obligations consistent with their principles.

To illustrate how libertarian policies could be applied to actual situations, we quote the following excerpts from *Black Cat*, newsletter of the IWW Boston Branch, April

1980:

> Last week the locked out employees of Eugene's Restaurant and Pub, against our advice, voted to affiliate with the Hotel, Restaurant, Institutional Employees, and Bartenders Union, AFL-CIO. Unfortunately, it will not be long before they discover that this affiliation will yield them no benefits of any value but will result in their losing the control they formerly had over their own activities. Hopefully, the next time they are in similar circumstances they will have learned some lessons from their own experience....
>
> . . . the workers had no choice other than to apply direct action techniques rather than taking the NLRB route (which would probably have resulted in their case dying of old age two or three years later). They have badly hurt the owners in their pocketbooks where the sting is felt most sharply. If they can keep their picket lines up and avoid having the Hotel, Restaurant, and Bartenders' piecards sell them out behind their backs, they have an excellent chance of winning....

On February 28 the 465 registered nurses who are now employed at the Newton-Wellesley Hospital voted on whether or not to be represented by the Massachusetts Nurses Association. Presumably, the union won a majority of the votes but it may take years before anyone ever finds out for sure. Before the balloting the hospital administration asked the NLRB to broaden the bargaining unit to include all other professional employees at the hospital in addition to the nurses the Board then announced that the ballots would be impounded indefinitely....

. . . This amounts to nothing less than union busting by the NLRB . . . if the nurses just sit back and hope that the Board will eventually count the ballots and certify the union, they will lose for sure. The hospital will use the intervening period to fire or harass union militants out of their jobs and replace them with hand-picked scissorbills. . .

. . . The nurses should say: "To hell with the election, to hell with Board certification, to hell with the whole NLRB union-busting trap." They should

> begin to act union on the job. If they have enough support to win a representation election, they have enough support to go ahead and make their demands to management and get them. This would require a different kind of unionism than the one that relies on the NLRB procedure. This would require direct action and solidarity.... But if the nurses were to choose this alternative, they would wind up with a much stronger and more vital union, one that would truly represent them, because it *would be them*...

Libertarian Organization

Bureaucratic unions will ultimately have to be dismantled and re-placed by close-knit federations of independent factory and workplace councils. Unorganized workers, instead of joining the AFL-CIO or similar business unions, should also be encouraged to organize themselves into federations of independent councils. No single form of organization can possibly embrace the myriad needs of the workers. This is but one of the many forms of organization that may be considered. The self governing workers' associations must be flexible enough to experiment with

new, creative forms of organization, adopting those best suited to their particular and collective needs.

No form of organization, however well conceived, can possibly be immune to abuse of power. This is a built-in characteristic. The problem of abuse of power will probably never be fully resolved: but it *must be reduced to a minimum.* Therein, lies the vast contrast between libertarian and authoritarian forms of organization. Power will not flow from the bottom up or the top down, for the simple reason that there will be no top and there will be no bottom. Power will flow through the whole organism, like the circulation of the blood, constantly revitalizing and renewing its cells.

The tentative suggestions for the revival of the labor movement, outlined above, are by no means adequate. There are doubtless more that can only be worked out by the workers in the course of their struggles. We are primarily concerned with the orientation and general direction that should, in our opinion, radically alter the deplorable character of the American labor movement.

The first step for the regeneration of the labor movement, is, as already noted, the formation of a revolutionary minority movement capable of promoting to an appreciable

extent, the radicalization of the labor movement. Our weak, scattered forces, must be reconstituted on the basis of a clear theoretical and practical program of action responsive to the needs and aspirations of the new generation of rebels, upon whose shoulders will rest the burden of reshaping the labor movement.

We must not be impatient We must be prepared to work within the context of a long-range perspective which may take years of dedicated effort before visible progress will show that our struggles have not been in vain.

It is imperative that we launch a wide-ranging constructive discussion on better ways of promoting the regeneration of revolutionary unionism. None of us have all the answers. But together we can explore new possibilities and more effective methods than have thus far been advanced. It is hoped that the ideas here outlined will serve as the basis for such a discussion.